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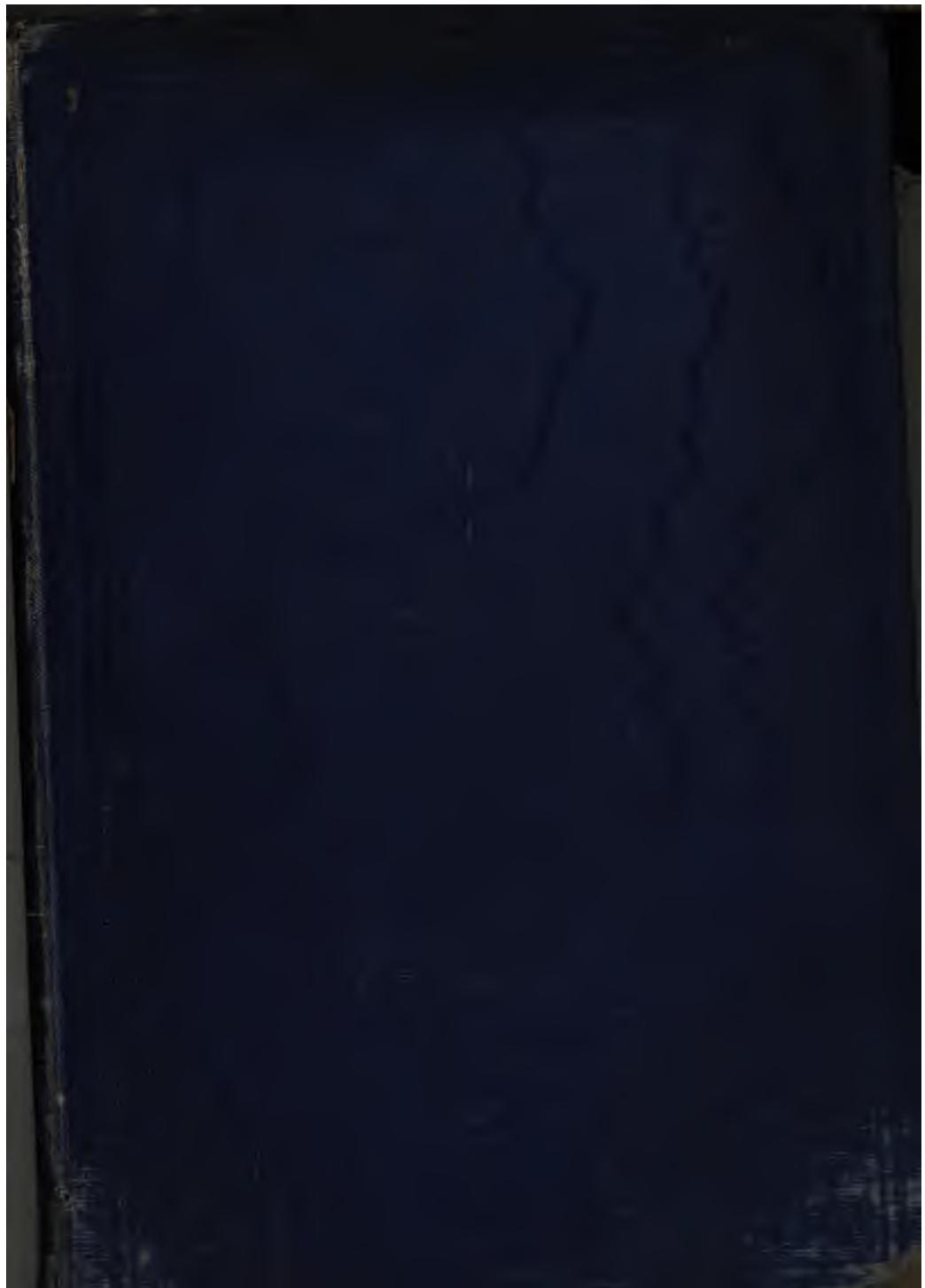
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NIGHT AND THE SOUL.

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NIGHT AND THE SOUL.

A Dramatic Poem.

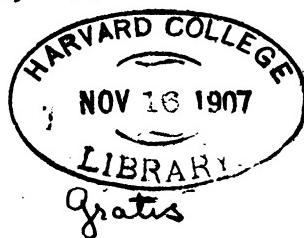
BY

J. STANYAN BIGG.
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LONDON :
GROOMBRIDGE AND SONS.

1854.

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TO

MY BROTHER JAMES,

This Volume

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

NIGHT AND THE SOUL.

SCENE I.—*A Wood. Night.*

ALEXIS and FERDINAND.

Alexis. [How deep the silence of these hoary woods,
Unbroken by the flutter of a wing,
Ungloom'd by not a throb of life ; but left
In primal peace, and purity, and bliss,—
The sad, wild bliss of silence, and the hush
Of prostrate awe, of deep expectancy. — the hush is death-like
Night has thrown wide her palace to her lord ;
One might expect to see a great swart king,
Begirt in unwrought gold and blazing gems,
Stride to his ebon throne among the stars,
And use the clouds for cushions, while the earth
Trembled up towards him like a sinning child !
How solemnly this graceful brotherhood
Of giant trees stand in thick serried lines !
Like a vast army after victory,
Waiting the final orders of their king.
Lo ! their huge arms hang listless at their sides,

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B

As if the mighty host were slumbering,
Save when the wind glides through them, like a dream,
Letting in slips of moonlight, and a glimpse
Of the blue heavens and their starry orbs.

[Ah ! there is something holy in this hush—
This lake-like, still, submergency of sound,
On whose unbroken quietudes our voices
Are as a desecration ; and our steps
Fall on the throbbing silence, as a wail
Amidst the harmonious choruses of heaven—
As a tooth-grinding jar among the harps
Of angels and of hierarchies.] [A pause.
Away !

What do we here ? Our very heart's pulsations,
Though they be low and muffled, like death-tolls,
Are out of tune with this most musical silence,
For they have something human in them—speak
Of petty purposes, and all the broils
That rack the bosom of mortality :
But Night is God and Nature's. 'Tis the house,
Black-pillared and sky-roofed, where They two hold
Their grand, unutterable intercourse !
It is the hour when Earth, our mother, claims
Companionship and sisterhood with stars ;
When, throwing off the trammelage of day,
She leaps into the Infinite, and sings
With all the galaxies, the ancient songs
Of all the ages and of all the suns ;

The hour when the Eternal One steps down
From His bright throne, and whispers in the ear
Of universal Nature the great truths
That have to shine upon the golden front
Of the To-morrow, to win back man's soul
Unto its purest self, and to its God.
Oh ! Night is holy like her sister Death :
Both bring, with silent step, and shadowy, cold
Star-jewelled hands, the black funereal ladder
Up whose cloud-barrèd steps man has to climb
To reach the rainbow fruitage of immortals ;
And in the centre of the dim, dark eyes
Of both these sable sisters is the gleam
Caught from the sunny side and upward slopes
Of the bright hills of immortality !
Is Night not conscious, thinkest thou, of us,
And all that slumber on her broad, black breast ?
And may she not have personality
And power to recall a dim remembrance
Of the great deeds wrought in her ere the earth
Was fashioned into beauty, or the moon
Gave her first invitation to the soul
To go and banquet with the sons of light,
Or the first years, warm with all sunny hues,
Ran sparkling from the upturned chalices
Of Time ? Are not the suns her bright-eyed children ;
And the glad stars her progeny : and all
The dancing glories which the day brings forth

NIGHT AND THE SOUL.

NIGHT AND THE SOUL.

A Dramatic Poem.

BY

J. STANYAN BIGG.
==

LONDON :
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1854.

Of wise and wizard serpents. It hath changed
Mankind into a host of greedy ghouls
With bloodshot eyes, and foul and clutching hands.

Alexis. Yes, man as ever follows his own folly,
Heedless of all his mighty destinies ;
And though a golden crown and robes like snow
Hang in Heaven's arch, suspended by a thread,
He will not, by a single act of his,
Dissever the thin cord, and suffer them
To fold him in the vesture of a king ;
Nor will he notice that the great white hand
Is busy, tracing out new characters
Upon the vast walls of the universe,
Until some second deep-eyed Daniel come
To lip the lightning words in thunder-tones !

Ferdinand. The host of men go streaming on through
time,
Like rivers over mud ; and then go out
Into eternity, and stain its shores
With all the foulness they have gathered up.
Like dusty pilgrims on the broad highway,
They heed not all the flower-paths close at hand,
But still plod on till night ; and then go in,
With all the grime of travel on their garb,
To meet the monarch of the Universe !

Alexis. Glide on, leaving a serpent-trail behind them—
A legacy of slime amid the sand.
The earth is fattened with their flesh and bones ;

The churchyard clasps them in its cold embrace,
And hands them over to corruption, who
Dissolves them into elemental limbs,
And in the sleep of ages yawns them forth,
To toss about in ghastly merriment,—
Mere dust,—their history and their cenotaph ;
For from the first they trod the crooked paths
Of worldly policy, with eyes down-bent,
And greedy souls crying unto the dust, Give ! Give !
Although behind them stretched infinitudes,
Star-dropped and sprinkled, and before them lay
Eternal domes of bliss, ablaze with light,
In whose vast jasper halls suns hung as tapers,
While eager angels beckoned them that way ;
And ever and anon Night pitched her tent,
And, holding up her ebon balance, cried
Lo ! in the one scale I have placed these worlds,
And in the other is your priceless soul.
Behold how it outweighs them all ! Yet still
They plodded onward with their dust-filled eyes,
Ever repeating their shrill whine for “ More ! ”
Until they stepped into the infinite,
And went down headlong into—who knows what ?

Ferdinand. The dread abyss ?

Alexis. Words are earth’s forgeries,
And pass not current either in Hell or Heaven.
It is as if, on mighty themes like this,
Language with puny, frantic arms, strove hard

To fold a mountain in its weak embrace.
We seek to paint the darkness, and our brush
Smears nothing but itself.

Ferdinand. Is it not sad that Nature ever spreads
In lavish prodigality her sweets
To tempt man's sickly appetite—in vain ;
And scatters from her rushing wings swift flakes
Of light, presages of the bliss of Heaven
On eyes that see not, and on souls as blind ;
And, like a young bird poised in upper air,
And hovering evermore on rainbow plumes,
Between the Eternal and the Infinite,
Sings ever low, and tremulous songs of both
Unto deaf ears. Is it not sad, I say ?

Alexis. We stand within the darkness of the porch
Of being—the Great Temple is beyond ;
And God hath hung up on the vaulted roof
These splendours, but to light us to our rest,
And to prepare us for the blaze to come !
Nature is still, as ever, the thin veil
Which half conceals, and half reveals the face
And lineaments supernal of our king,—
The modifying medium through which
His glories are exhibited to man,—
The grand repository where he hides
His mighty thoughts, to be dug out like diamonds ;—
Still is the day irradiate with His glory,
Flowing in steady, sun-streaked, ocean-gush

From His transcendent nature,—still at night
O'er our horizon trail the sable robes
Of the Eternal One, with all their rich
Embroidery and blazonment of stars.

Ferdinand. Alas ! that mankind see Him not,—the Great
And Everlasting Framer of all worlds ;
Who paints himself upon the leaves of flowers,
And flings his portrait on the breasted clouds,
And sheds his syllogisms in the shape
Of suns and moons and planetary systems.
How is it that our fellows see not beauty,
That great thoughts never visit them ?

Whether they come in quiet majesty,
Like silent-footed pilgrims from the shrines
Far off, of old eternities, and bear
Tapers within their hands, to light the altars
Of the great inner temple, and reveal
Unto itself its wealth of pictured splendour ;
Or come upon me full of power, and fling
My cherished prejudices round and round
In chaff-like whirling eddies, with their stride ;
Or shake the firm foundations of my creeds,
Like busy lightnings peeling off stone-flakes
Adown rock-precipices, laying bare
The flinty ribs of chasms and deep gulphs ;
Or whether they advance spontaneously,
Prank'd in deep shadows, like the dark-brow'd Night,
When I have lulled my soul into a hush
For their reception, and they glimmer in,
One following the other, like the stars
Taking their place upon the deep blue blank
Until one greater than the rest slides in
With all his wheeling glories round his head, .
Like a great sun with his attendant planets.

Ferdinand. Great thoughts oppress me like an incubus.

They sit upon my soul like thunderbolts.
I am uneasy with them as my guests,
While all the tiny beauties that entwine
Their wreath-like graces round the universe,
And gleam like lights upon stalactites

Depending from the vaulted roofs of dark
Earth-grottoes, and go flashing up and down
Amid the summer sunshine of the world,
Like the bright wings of spangled butterflies—
All melt into my soul like lunar rainbows !

Alexis. I love to grasp a great thought by the heel
And plunge it underneath another Styx,
And see it come forth bright, invincible—
Strong, and yet beautiful—Achilles-like.

Ferdinand. But all great thoughts and mysteries make
me sad.

Alexis. Well, and why not ? The soul that hath not
sorrowed

Knows neither its own weakness nor its strength ; ▵.
Sorrow reveals heaven to us ; for our souls
Hang in the infinite like sun-dyed globes
On which the time-rays of the present play ;
But ever and anon a shadow comes
Over and on them, cast forth from their thrones
In the great world-to-come, when a bright seraph
Glides like a glow behind them. And our woes
Are like the moon reversed, the broad bright disk
Turned heavenwards—the dark side towards us,
Till God in His great mercy turns them round,
And rolls them with a wise and gentle hand,
Into the dim horizon of the past,
To bless us with their smile of tearful lustre.

Ferdinand. There is a step winding along the vale.

Shall we avoid it ?

Alexis. No ! let us remain.

Antonio (coming up). Good even, friends. How are you both ? 'Tis long

Since I have seen you. Dreaming still I see.

Been having a chit-chat with the stars, maybe

A little quiet gossip with them,—hey ?

Well, well ! there 's no accounting now for tastes.

Anything new up yonder ? Any news ?

Alexis. No, nothing much ! 'Tis said the moon hath dropped
Another egg or two, for they were seen
With the new telescope, not long ago,
Flying adown the western slopes.

Antonio. In-deed !

That 's all then, is it ? No new signs appear,
No portents, shadows of events to come,
Nothing like war or famine anywhere
Brewing, perhaps ?

Alexis. No ! Not that we know of !
There 's Ursa Major there. Dost hear him growl ?
But people say his rotten fangs are gone,
And that he can do nought but hug himself !

Antonio. Ah ; well, I thought it was no harm to ask.
People like you, out always in the night,
I fancied might have learned a thing or two ;
But it 's no matter.

Alexis. Nay, those times have passed
When the stars peached about events to come !

Albertus Magnus might have helped you now,
Or *Campanella*, *Fludd*, or *Jacob Behmen*.

Antonio. Aye ! and where are they ?

Alexis. Resting in their graves.

Antonio. Why then do you refer me to dead men ?

Alexis. Because the dead teach better than the living.

Antonio. And that is all you know,—there 's nothing else
That would be worth a man like me to hear ?

Alexis. Why yes ! 'Tis said, the other night, *Aquarius*
Scattered his water-bowl, and all his stars
Wept long and sadly, that men were such fools
As to outshame the worm in their pursuits,
And starve their souls to make their purses fat !

Antonio. Ha ! Ha ! I see. A little pleasant—hey ?
Well, well—good night.

Both. Good night.

Ferdinand. And he is gone,
With all his dreary soul unlightened by
A single ray to say it is divine.

Alexis. Oh no, not so. *Antonio* is a man
Of weight and influence in the busy world ;
A most respectable and weighty man,
With lands and houses, and a heart of steel
For all who tenant them ; a prudent man,
Who keeps a keen shrewd eye on the “ main chance,”
And never lets an opportunity
Slip eel-like by, unused or unimproved.
He would sack heaven and earth, and make his soul

Into a greasy money-bag, just that
He might say to the world—all this is mine,
And hear his pockets jingle when he walks !

Ferdinand. Most noble truly ! Ah, one feels with such
As if the world had lost its bright attractions ;
As if the sun were blotted out, and all
The stars were folded in their funeral robes,
And carried once for all to their lone graves
In uttermost Cimmerian realms of night ;
And all the glances of the eyes we love
Were turned into the heartless stare of death ;
And all the words of fondness, bubbling up
Fresh from the founts of feeling, were struck dumb ;
And Nature had grown beautiless, and left
A charred and shrivelled image of herself
On the drear blanks of space, where grim mines yawned,
In which we were to toil and sweat for gold
In ever-during darkness—lidded night !
With such as these the world seems but a waste,
On whose aridities our very hopes
Sink spent, flapping their white wings till they perish !

Alexis. Ah, well ! Such souls as these soon close on all
The indentations made by holy things,
Retaining nothing but the print of hoofs,
Telling how oft the owner goes that way,
And set upon them as a speaking witness
Of his dark sway and ownership.

Before

This subject slipped like night into our talk,
I said, all grief is but a jagged shred
Of the dark robe that is agleam with gems ;
That a dead sorrow is a living joy,
And, like a pale corpse, yields a deathless soul
To wing its way up to the seats of bliss.

Ferdinand. Ah yes ! pains past are pain no longer ; true !
But what of those that loom up in the future ?

Alexis. Future and past are one ; but diverse aspects
Of the same central ever-during sphere.
The Present falsely seems to sunder them
With its poor dwindling Now,—but it is nought,—
A sunbeam flickering dimly between two
Eternities as dim,—the merest flash
Of the bright sword with which God smites the blue
And bending infinite into life and light,
Disseminating gleams both ways. And all
The lambent glories which the future paints
Upon the soul's horizon, are but rays
Drawn from its lost experiences within
The dim primordial Past ;—and night reveals them,
As yon great arch above us—God's black banner—
Lets the soft star-beams tremble through.

In the dim and dreamy night,
When no object of the sense
Blinds the spirit's inward light,
Or mars the holy influence,—

The barbèd arrows of the soul,
Wing'd with fiery exstacy,
Singing through the deeps of time,
Pierce into eternity :—
Opening up dark recollections
Of the distant starry spheres ;
Images, and dim reflections,
Older than the ancient years.
Like the echo of some story
Through the mists of memory driven,
Come these glimpses of our glory
On the sunny banks of heaven ;—
Spangles of our ancient vestments
By the hands of mercy torn,
To remind us of the grandeur
Which our spirits once have worn ;
Kindlings of seraphic fire,
Beamings from the thrones on high,
Echoes of old melodies
Taught to us beyond the sky.
Dark and mystic are these visions
Of our former blest estate,
Strange and deep, and dim and shadowy
As the dusky wings of fate.
Yet, amidst the awe and darkness,
Is a light whose paly sheen
Tells us, hope-like, that we shall be
Once again what we have been.

Tells us that the radiations
 Which our tranced souls behold
Are the gleaming scintillations
 From the gemmèd crowns of gold
 Which we once wore when in glory,
 Ere we knew the name of pain ;
And—so sings the heavenly story—
 Which we shall wear once again ;
Are the bursting buds of blessings
 Sent to cheer us in the night,—
Wreathèd flowers, and fruits, and blossoms
 Scatter'd from the fields of light :
That the thrills of joy that reach us
 Tokens are of old relations,
Are the pledges of affection
 Sent us from seraphic nations ;—
That our gem-soul is the setting
 Of a brighter, happier sphere ;
That our home is in the heavens,
Our probation only—here.

But lo ! yon dull grey cloud, now spreading o'er
 The eastern heavens, and coming like a pale—
 Brow'd Prophet to announce the numbering
 Of the night's hours ; or like a herald, spent
 And all begrimed by dirty roads and haste,
 Rushing upon the grave proprieties
 Of a great court, all deck'd in robes and jewels.

Dost thou not see it there—
Plucking already from the brow of Night
The stars that gem her coronal ? See how
Transparent and attenuate it seems,
Like the thin hand of Death, waving a soul
To glory. We must part.

Ferdinand. Farewell, Alexis.

Alexis. Farewell. But we will meet again, when Night
Throws her black pall athwart the corpse-like heavens,
And typifies the shadows and the glooms
That fold about the heart and soul of those
Who, in these times of ours, with daring wing
Dive down into the deeps of human life,
And come back reeking with dark doubts and dreads,
Or, with their plumage scorch'd and shrivell'd, dare
To utter profanations, and blaspheme.
But we will see, if from the darksome vault
Of human speculation, God will let
A bright but lowly faith glide to our souls
Like a young moon, to beautify the scene
With rays like reflexes of heaven, and show
The holiness of beauty, and of life.

SCENE II.—*An Alcove in a Garden. Night.*

FLORA and CAROLINE.

Caroline. Flora, my dear, why do you look so sad ?
Is not the night most lovely, with her locks
Dark as the raven's wing—and all around
A very picture of repose and peace—
Bathed in the luxuries of tranquil bliss,
Steep'd to the very lips in extacy
Too passionate for words, like the sweet moments
When the eye only speaks th' unsyllabled words
Of the o'erbrimming heart, and the soul spills
The overflowing fulness of its joy
In the sweet eloquence of silence. Hark !
The only voices that disturb the night,
Or rather mingle with its solemn hush,
Are two, save ours :—That of the restless wind
Gliding about among the trees, as if
The Angel of the Earth were passing o'er
The velvet carpet of her palace-home,
From chamber unto chamber, just to see,
With all the yearning of a mother's heart,
That all her loved ones were asleep and well,
And look her last on them for this one night,
And take their happy dreams with her to Heaven ;
And that the motion that we hear was but

The rustle of her garments ; and the other
Is the soft silver-sounding splash of yonder
Moss-covered fountain. How I love the sound
Of falling water ! It hath something in it
Which speaks of the long past,—of infancy,
And the bright pearl-like days of childhood ; and
I fancy that I hear it murmuring
Stories of red ripe berries ; and with glee,
And with an innocent cunning, telling of
Those secret nooks where thickest hang the nuts
From their o'erladen branches :—Oh ! it speaks,
In tones one cannot help but understand,
Of those far-distant times when all things were
Treasures and joys—not to be bought with worlds ;
When a new pleasure was a pleasure, just
Because that it was new ; and all things seem'd
As pretty-playthings to the new-born soul
Constructed for its use and sole amusement.
But why art thou so sad ?

Flora. *Nay, Caroline,*
Not sad ! No, not quite that,—and yet,—ah well !
The Night is lovely, and I love her with
A passionate devotion, for she stirs
Feelings too deep for utterance within me.
She thrills me with an influence and a power,
A saddened kind of joy I cannot name,
So that I meet her brightest smile with tears.
She seemeth like a prophetess, too wise,

Knowing, ah! all too much for happiness ;
As though she had tried all things, and had found
All vain and wanting, and was thenceforth steep'd
Up to the very dark, tear-lidded eyes
In a mysterious gloom, a holy calm !
Doth she not look now just as if she knew
All that hath been, and all that is to come ?
With one of her all-prescient glances turn'd
Towards those kindred depths which slept for aye,—
The sable robe which God threw round Himself,
And where, pavilioned in glooms, He dwelt
In brooding night for ages, perfecting
The glorious dream of past eternities,
The fabric of creation,—running adown
The long Time-avenues, and gazing out
Into those blanks which slept before Time was ;
And with another searching glance, turn'd up
Towards unknown futurities—the book
Of unborn wonders,—till she hath perused
The chapter of its doom ; and with an eye
Made vague by the dim vastness of its vision,
Watching unmoved the fall of burning worlds,
Rolling along the steep sides of the Infinite,
All ripe, like apples dropping from their stems ;
Till the wide fields of space, like orchards stripp'd,
Have yielded up their treasures to the garner,
And the last star hath fallen from the crown
Of the high heavens into utter night,

Like a bright moment swallow'd up and lost
In hours of after-anguish ; and all things
Are as they were in the beginning, ere
The mighty pageant trail'd its golden skirts
Along the glittering pathway of its God—
Save that the spacious halls of heaven are fill'd
With countless multitudes of finite souls,
With germ-like infinite capacities,
As if to prove all had not been a dream.
'Tis this that Night seems always thinking of ;
Linking the void past to the future void,
And typifying present times in stars,
To show that all is not quite issueless,
But that the blanks have yielded starlike ones
To cluster round the sapphire throne of God
In bliss for ever, and for evermore !
Oh yes ! I love the Night, who ever standeth
With her gemm'd finger on her rich ripe lip,
As if in attitude of deep attention,
Catching the mighty echoes of the words
Which God had utter'd ere the earth was form'd,
Or ere yon Infinite blushed like a bride
With all her jewels ; and I love the flowers,
And their soft slumber as they lie around
In the sweet starlight, bathed in love-like dew,
And looking like young sisters, orphans too,
Left to our watchful care and guardianship,
To keep them from the rough-voiced, burly winds,

And see that nought invades their soul-like sleep.
Thou canst not tell me what I do not love
In all this dark-robed family of peace ;
The temporary hush of the low winds,
And their uprising wail ;—the shadows there
Cast from the long dark shrubberies, that move
And rest again on the green sward, and nod
Their hearselike plumage to the passing winds ;—
The deep, unclouded light, half glow, half gloom,
Dark, and yet lustrous, gleaming with a fire
Whose sources seem unfathomable ;—love
Even the very grass beneath our feet,
Whose graceful blades I almost fear to tread on,
Because when I have passed, they raise themselves
Again, half in reproach, so quietly
Turning themselves once more unto the heaven
That cherishes and feeds them, I could weep
That I had crush'd them underneath my foot ;—
Even yon tree, standing so lonely there,
As if it dreamt of all the music which
Its branches used to hold when in their prime,
Ere it became a dead and blasted thing
Upon the bosom of the living world,
Which she still weareth, as a maiden wears
The wither'd flowers of the sweet Long-Ago,
Ere love itself and lover both were dead !
And yet I love it too—grim ancient thing.
All, all, oh ! yes, I dearly love them all !

But Caroline, my dear, canst thou not guess
Why the night makes me sad?

Caroline. Oh yes, I can!
Trust me for that, my dear simplicity!
Thou ever wert a loving, trusting one;
With all thy heart expanded, like a rose
Casting its richest fragrance to the winds,
Retaining the sweet grace of childhood, with
A broad, high spirit always on the march.
I used to be much puzzled with thee once,
For when I saw thee moved, I used to think
Thy tender heart was too great for thy soul:
And then again when I have seen thee stand
Unblenching in the presence of such thoughts
As would shake lesser spirits to their fall,
And topple reason and her balance o'er,
I thought, with something of a shudder, that
Thy soul was greater even than thy heart.
It may be that I could not fathom either,
And therefore each seem'd greater than the other
Just as occasion alternated them.
But I have learn'd to see that heart and soul
Are rounded into perfect harmony
In my sweet friend;—and Flora, I could tell
The name of him, the great magician, who
Hath wrought this change within thee—shall I now?

Flora. Yes.

Caroline. It is love! And now, my little one,—

Forgive me, pray, for treating thee as such ;—
Although I reverence thy greater gifts,
I feel towards thee, dearest Flora, just
As an elder sister might unto the child
Left to her tutelage and care ; for thou
In all thy innocent wisdom art as strange
To all the wiles of worldlings as a child,—
Art like a crusted diamond, dark and void,
Confined within the earth ; but when released
And brought out to the kindred light of heaven,
Glowing and beaming like a new-born star.
And now, my dear, I will reveal the cause
Why the night makes thee sad ; 'tis simply this,
That in its depths thou seest a shadowy reflex
Of him thou lovest ; while its crested stars
Like his great thoughts, seem ever flashing up
The infinite expanse in search of God—
The ultimate and primal truth of things,
And preaching still the unattainable
In lines of light, whose meaning lies beneath
In piles of darkness, which, like that o'erhead,
Is infinite. Is it not so now, say ?
His absence makes thee sad. Am I not right ?

Flora. Oh Carry, thou wert ever a sad rogue !
Yes, thou art partly right.

Caroline. Nay, altogether !
I know I am ! And now then tell me this—
Whose thoughts were those thou didst regale me with

But now? I fancy I have heard a voice
Well known to thee, utter some vastly like them.

Flora. Right once again! Alexis taught me them.
And oh! I think his thoughts so oft within
The solitudes of night, and even dream
Of them in sleep, until they form a part
Of my soul's garniture, and it remains
No more a wonder that I utter them,
As if they were my own; and sometimes too
I catch the rainbow robe of his expressions—
The very words he used—not only stringing
His gems upon a gold thread of my own,
But taking up the casket that enshrined
His jewels.

Caroline. Nay, Flora, now thou wrong'st thyself!
For thy thoughts are original as his;
And I meant only he had given the tone
And wing'd the tendency of thy remarks.
I wonder where those dreamers are just now,
Alexis and that tiresome Ferdinand.

Flora. That tiresome Ferdinand? Ah, Caroline!
Caroline. Talking, I warrant now, about the plan
And method of the universe; and plunged
In difficulties on the politics
And civil laws of Saturn; weaving webs
Of lofty speculation in their minds
To bridge across the gulf-like infinite,
And suffer them to crawl o'er—spider-wise—

Heaven's dizzy ceiling, with their heads turn'd down
To pay a friendly visit to the moon,
And ask the stars how they get on up there!

Flora. Ho! hold thy tongue, thou pretty rattlepate!

Caroline. Is not the earth quite wide enough for them?
And are we ciphers in the universe?
Come, let us sing that song Alexis taught thee.
I will begin.

CAROLINE.—Earth.

I am lovely, I am lovely,
All the young stars tell me so;
And the current of my life blood
Is a bounding, merry flow;
All my garments are bejewell'd:
Who can show a face as fair?
And I reign the queen of beauty
Over all the fields of air.

FLORA.—Heaven.

Ah! my daughter, thou art lovely,
But beneath the burning glow
Of thy beauty, is there nothing
To remind thee of thy woe?
Is thy heart as pure as ever,
Is thy spirit free from sin,
Though thy outward life be lovely,
Is there nothing foul within?

CAROLINE.—*Earth.*

Oh, I care not; I am lovely;
Is there any world can say
That it shows so fair a bosom
To the golden eye of day?
I am lovely, I am lovely,
That is quite enough for me,
For I am unto the heavens
What a pearl is to the sea.

FLORA.—*Heaven.*

But thy fair and flaunting tresses
Hide a dark and guilty brow,
And a thousand purpling curses
Gleam like lightnings o'er thee now:
Oh! repent my lovely daughter,
Be a star among the spheres;
Come and lave thy burning temples
In thy mother's flowing tears.

CAROLINE.—*Earth.*

No, I will not! I am lovely,
All the planets court my glance;
And the great sun smiles upon me
As I mingle in the dance;
And I drink the wine of ages
By the ancient star-gods given;
Oh, I am a gleaming lustre
On thy pallid front, oh Heaven!

FLORA.—*Heaven.*

Oh, my daughter, thou art madden'd
With this loveliness of thine,
Dash that hellish goblet from thee,
Fill'd with gore-drops, not with wine.
Tear those garments, blood-bespatter'd,
Hide that bosom stain'd with sin.
Make the outward like the inward
And the shell like that within.

CAROLINE.—*Earth.*

Oh, I care not ! I am lovely,
And my purple robes are bright,
And I shine amid the darkness
Like a star-beam in the night ;
And I am unto the planets
What a smile is to a frown,
The star-gem of thy bosom
And the jewel of thy crown.

FLORA.—*Heaven.*

Ah ! my lovely, poor lost daughter !
From thy madden'd dream arouse ;
Lo ! a charnel is thy palace,
And a death's-head is thy spouse.
Come once more unto thy mother,
Lift thine eye up unto Heaven,
Look to God, my poor lost daughter,
And thy foul heart shall be shriven.

Caroline. Ah! 'tis no wonder now, with views like these,
That they—I mean Alexis and dear Ferdinand—
Should turn away from earth, and look to heaven
For that repose, and peace, and purity
Which never have dwelt here.

Flora. And yet, O Earth,
We love thee, in whatever drapery
Thou art invested.—Whether thou dost come
With all thy budding-blossomings of Spring,
Orbing themselves into fulfilment; or,
Girdled in nameless glories, in the prime
And plenitude of Summer, with thy zone
Sun-dyed and purpled, like the gates of heaven;
Or whether in the ripe fruition-bursts
Of golden autumns, with their loaded wains,
Nodding like gods whose smile is plenty; or,
In thy most ghostly garb of winter, when
Thou foldest up thyself in faultless snows,
And lookest like a marble-sculptured form,
Waiting for some fire-giving god to breathe
Into thy spotless shape the breath of life;
Or whether deck'd in all the pomp and glow
Of thy day-splendours and activities,
Brushing the gather'd skirts of ebon darkness
With opaline gem-like sunbeams; or, at night,
When thou unrollest thy great map of stars;
Or when thou wrappest round thee heavy clouds,
And the white foam of brattling tempests, and

Peoplest thy caverns with a thousand wails,
And night with wandering voices full of woe ;
Or whether, with thy brow serene and calm,
Thou stretchest o'er thee, like a tranquil thought, ✓
The charmèd circle of thy summer skies ;
In each of thy appearances we love thee ;
Whether a smile dwells on thee like a blessing,
Or a frown hangs its thunder-curtain o'er
Thy beetling temples ; Oh, we love thee, Earth !
Thou beautiful ! Thou happy once ! We love
Both thee and thine, for art thou not our mother ?

Caroline. Yes, Flora, and in spite of all her faults,
And even sometimes, perhaps, *because* of them,
Earth's children cling tenaciously to her
As to a mother, though they may have dreams
Of peace and happiness in other spheres.
Didst ever hear of any who declared
That they did not, and yet who were sincere
In their profess'd alienation ?

Flora. Yes !
Of one such I have heard :—A fair young girl
To whom one keen woe, like the scythe of Death,
Had sever'd at a stroke the ties of earth,—
The tender trammelage of love and hope,—
And not released the spirit from its clay,
But left it bleeding out at every pore,
Clinging with torn hands to its prison-bars,
And gasping out towards the light, in vain.

For she had loved and been deserted ; and
All her heart's wealth was now return'd to her
Base metal, and not current coin. Her love
Which went forth from her bright and beautiful
Came back a ghastly corpse, to turn her heart
Into a bier, and chill it with its weight
Of passive woe for ever. But the shock
Had turn'd the poles of being, and henceforth,
In circles ever narrowing, her soul
Went wheeling like a stricken world, round heaven.

EDITH.

Eyes she had, in whose dark lustre,
Slumber'd wild and mystic beams ;
And a brow of polish'd marble,—
Pale abode of gorgeous dreams ;—
Dreams that caught the hues and splendours
Which the radiant future shows,
For the past was nought but anguish,
And a sepulchre of woes ;
Therefore from its scenes and sorrows
All her heart and soul were riven ;
And her thoughts kept ever wandering
With the angels up to heaven.

When they told her of the pleasures
Which the future had in store,
When her sorrows would have faded
And her anguish would be o'er ;—

Told her of her wealth and beauty
And the triumphs in their train ;
Told her of the many others
Who would sigh for her again,—
She but caught one half their meaning
While the rest afar was driven.
“ Yes,” she murmur’d, “ they are happy—
They, I mean, who dwell in heaven ! ”

When they wish’d once more to see her
Mingling with the bright and fair ;
When they told her of the splendour
And the rank that would be there ;
Told her that amid the glitter
Of that brilliant living sea,
There were none so sought and sigh’d for,
None so beautiful as she ;
Still she heeded not the flattery,
Heard but half the utterance given ;
“ Yes,” she answer’d, “ there *are* bright ones,
Many too I know—in heaven ! ”

When they spoke of sunlit glories,
Summer days, and moonlit hours ;—
Told her of the spreading woodland,
With its treasury of flowers ;
Clustering fruits, and vales, and mountains,
Flower-banks mirror’d in clear springs,

Winds whose music ever mingled
With the hum of glancing wings,—
Scenes of earthly bliss and beauty
Far from all her thoughts were driven,
And she fancied that they told her
Of the happiness of heaven.

For one master-pang had broken
The sweet spell of her young life;
And henceforth its calm and sunshine
Were as tasteless as its strife:
Henceforth all its gloom and grandeur,
All the music of its streams,
All its thousand pealing voices
Spoke the language of her dreams;—
Dreams that wander'd on, like orphans ✓
From all earthly solace driven,
Searching for their great protector
And the palace-gates of heaven.

Caroline. Ah! I was thoughtless when I question'd thee,
And reck'd not of those broken-hearted ones
Who are among us now, in spite of all
The sneers of hollow worldlings, who would fain
Persuade themselves and us that wither'd hearts,—
Hearts from whose deathliness all joys have flown
As birds from winter,—are but poets' dreams,
Feign'd but to rouse a tear or to amuse.

Who hath not seen them,—the dead living ones,
With that sad ghastly something—meant to hide
From other eyes the anguish and the woe
That are consuming them,—that something, which
Like the poor pallid ghost of a dead smile,
Plays over lips that never shall smile more—
Cold as December moonbeams on snow-drifts?

Flora. Yes! Who hath not seen them come where
music is,
And high-pitch'd jubilance and merriment,
Like a low, plaintive semi-tone to break
The noisy harmony into pathos, and
Gliding upon the gorgeous lighted rooms,
Like a November gloom let deftly in
Among the golden hours of Summer. Oh!
Who hath not seen and pitied what he saw?
And felt for these most solitary souls
Left to the wardenship of misery;
Within whose charmèd circle not a ray
So far mistakes its mission as to pierce,
And not a sound of mirth *can* penetrate,
For all things take its shape and breathe its tone;—
Those earth-abjured ones unto whom the stars
Preach nothing but the record of their woe,
And tell it to the depths in which they slumber;
To whom the day inscribes it on the clouds,
And figures it in well known hieroglyphs
Upon the front of all things and all times;

To whom Night typifies it in her glooms ;
And all the winds come laden with its wail ;
And all sounds seem to utter it in turns ;
And all the trees seem nodding their farewell
To happiness for ever. And the flowers,
Bending beneath its weight, seem glad to die ;
And sobs and sighs are all the food of time ;
And all things bright have got it as their shadow ;
And every joy is but the gay reverse,—
The bright blank nothing,—but the picture's back,—
The portrait of their woe turn'd to the wall !
Woe ! woe ! All woe ! Until it is sublime,
And the great thing stands out, and clasps the world
Within its gaunt, dark arms, and cries, Behold,
Here is my infant !—Those unhappy ones
Who take their anguish round about with them,
And whose dead atmosphere opaques all things,
And dyes them in its sable hues :—Who seem
For ever wondering why the world is glad,
And why it does not let its great black heart
Reveal itself and gloom upon its face.
Ah ! there are many dead ones walking up
And down the world whose thoughts are not with us
Nor with the living earth, and asking nought
Of all its sunshine, and its smiles, and bliss,
But pleading with the passion of despair
For nothing but a grave and burial.

SCENE III.—*A Library. Night.**ALEXIS and FERDINAND.*

Alexis. O thought! What art thou but a fluttering leaf
Shed from the garden of Eternity;—
The robe in which the soul invests itself
To join the countless myriads of the skies;—
The very air they breathe in heaven;—the gleam
That lights it up, and makes it what it is;—
The light that glitters on its pinnacles;—
The luscious bloom that flushes o'er its fruits;
The odour of its flowers, and very soul
Of all the music of its million harps;
The dancing glory of its angels' eyes;—
The brightness of its crowns, and starlike glow
Of its bright thrones;—the centre of its bliss,
For ever radiating like a sun;—
The spirit thrill that pulses through its halls,
Like sudden music vibrating through air;—
The splendour playing on its downy wings;—
The lustre of its sceptres, and the breeze
Which shakes its golden harvests into light;—
The diamond apex of the Infinite;—
A ray of the great halo round God's head;—
The consummation and the source of all,
In which all cluster, and all constellate,
Grouping like glories round the purple west

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One gem upon the costly floor of heaven ;
One tiny firstling among all the wealth,
Which, going from Thee glances, is return'd
As suns. And to Thine eye one human thought
Interprets all the rest ; the dynasties
Of mightiest intellect, or martial power,
The Pharaohs and the Cæsars, and the times
Of Persian splendour, and of Grecian might,—
One human thought, invested in an act,
Lays bare the heart of all humanity,
And holds up, globule-like, in miniature
All that the soul of man hath yet achieved,
Its Paradises Lost, its glorious Iliads,
Its Hamlets and Othellos, and its dreams
Rising in towering Pyramids and Fanes
To show that earth hath raptures heavenward ;
And like the touched lips of a hoary saint
Utters dim prophesies of after-worlds,
Making sweet music to the ear of God,
Like Memnon's statue thrilling at the sun ;
And, as the New Year opening into life
Is all-related to the ages, so
Are man's works unto Thine, Almighty God ;
And as the ages to eternity,
So are *all* works to Thee, Great Source of all !
And were all nature void, one human thought
Self-utter'd and evolved in act, left like
A white bone on the brink of the abyss

As the sole relic of what once had been :
Thou, who perceivest at a glance the all
In one, who scannest all relationships,
In whom all issues meet concentrative—
Couldst, from this puny fragment of Thy works,
Recal and re-arrange, and re-construct
The mighty Mammoth skeleton of things,
And fold it once more in its spotted skin,
And bid the bright Beast live :—Couldst, from this one
Poor little earthling, wither'd like a flower
Placed as a record by a death-struck hand
Between the leaves of the great Book of Doom,
Relume the dark—re-paradise all heaven,
Until the heaving infinite once more
Broke into light, and budded forth in stars.

Ferdinand. Thought is the prophet of eternity.
And God hath written on its orbéd brow
“Deathless for ever.” Oh ! it cannot die ;
It is the soul’s bright essence and its source.

Alexis. All human souls dwelt in the mind of God
As purposes and grand intents, until
He wing’d them into utterance, to float
On independent pinions of their own,—
Made independent by His holy will,—
And, like a mighty convoluted wheel
Fire-barred and girdled, throwing off its sparks
For ever into the eternal dark
In humble imitation of its God,

The soul casts nothing from it but itself.
Bright fire-flakes gathering into spirit-gems
To flash for ever on the thrones of heaven
And flood its crowns with glory, or to mix
With the prolific glooms of darkness—so
Say some—in horrent shapes and chimeras,
To blast the soul like hell-fed dragons' eyes.

Ferdinand. But, thinkest thou, these black thoughts like
the good

Are all eternal ?

Alexis. No. If they be dark,
The darkness swallows them ; if light, they live.

Ferdinand. The good and beautiful will always bloom,
And bear their rich, ripe fruit for evermore ;
While all the sinful, and the godless, like
A sapless branch, must perish endlessly.

Alexis. For God is light ; and all things dwell in Him.
And is it possible that He will let
The broad disc of His glory be obscured
By black spots dwelling with Him evermore ?
Will He encasket darkness, and enshrine
The foul things of the earth in amber salts,
Conerves of sulphurous fire and flaming smoke ?
Is sin a god that it should live for ever ?
Or hath it a dark region of its own,
A dungeon empire where it reigns supreme,
Beyond the boundary line of God's dominions,
Out of the reach of His long sceptre, where

He is not known as King, but only held
An alien Monarch, and a rival? Ha!
Doth God brook rivals then? What, He! Nay! Nay!
The time is coming when that foul thing, Sin,
Shall, like a long distemper vanish; and
From all the hearts of men the gory stain
Of its blood finger-prints shall be wash'd out.
The doom of sin is death. Dust unto dust!
Night unto night!

Ferdinand. 'Tis likely. But are all thoughts moral then?

Alexis. Not all.

Ferdinand. No, for they come to us unsought,
Unquestion'd sometimes, sometimes undesired.
But whether willingly admitted, or
Thrown out as traitors, they have been, though but
For one short moment, in the citadel;
And, tell-tale like, they speed away to heaven,
To say, before its hosts, where they have lodged.

Alexis. But man is not responsible for thoughts
Not guested by the will. And yet, 'tis well
To place a sentinel before the gate,
To claim the password from all comers-in.
For we are frail; and human will is blind,
And sometimes clasps a devil in the dark,
Unwittingly.

Ferdinand. Oh! how they flutter in,
Countless as fire-flies in a southern night;
Some good, some evil, till the soul is strew'd

With angels' pinions, and with sable plumes—
Attesting truly to their origin.
How many thoughts, I wonder, in a day,
Does one mind utter forth ?

Alexis. The thoughts it sheds
It has to answer for. For these are they
That have been honourably entertain'd,
Invited visitors, and pamper'd guests.
On whom the soul has waited like a slave ;
Thoughts that have come and found the heart prepared
To lodge them in its inmost sumptuous rooms.

Ferdinand. And action is the complement of thought,
Thought crystallised and held up to the view ;
Thought is the sap of life, and act the fruit.

Alexis. All acts before they were such, were first
thoughts,
And as they flash out from the hand, they go
To spirit-land again, and are thoughts there :—
First thought, then act, and shortly thought again,
And thus the truth republishes itself.

Ferdinand. Acts are the fingers that shape out man's
doom,—
The cunning instruments with which he weaves
The tissue of the soul's robes, both for time
And for eternity.

Alexis. And every act
Is deathless as the mind from which it sprang.
We do but strike the keys here, while the sound—

The unsubstantial and ethereal essence—
The jarring discord or the harmony,
Rolls and reverberates for evermore
Through the dread chambers of eternity.
No sooner does an act go from us, than
Its wings catch up the light of other worlds,—
The iridescent dyes and hues of heaven,
Or the dark sables of another land.
All acts are moral; or may be made such.

Ferdinand. Ah! Thou art all for thought. The universe,
To thee, is but a thought worked out in pictures.

Alexis. It is. And is it not such? What are suns,
Systems and worlds, but mighty thoughts of God,
All waiting to become the thoughts of men?
Have we already not appropriated
Wide fields of the grand empire of all things?
Where is the rainbow that has never spann'd
An arc of some man's mind? Where is the cloud
That has not enter'd in the dreams of some,—
The humble flower that never hath been hallow'd
To one poor heart? Where is the landscape, which,
Like a dumb man, hath never utter'd ought,—
The atom, or the season, or the hour
That hath not gone into the soul of man
And come out thence a thought? And that—out there,—
Out at that window,—yonder infinite
Hushing around us now with all its stars,—
Say, what are they and it but images—

Ideas made objective,—and held out,
Night after night, between the outstretch'd arms
Of God, to mirror forth His thoughts to man,
And show the recreant how and what to think ?
And when the soul shall recognise in all
That which each typifies—when every cloud
Shall be a bright-brow'd messenger of God ;
And every breeze shall utter forth His name ;
And every star shall write it over heaven ;
And every flower shall breathe it ere it dies ;
And every wave shall say it to itself ;
And every storm in thunder-transport shout,
High o'er the heads of all, His majesty ;
When to the soul of man all circumstance,
All swift evolvement of events, shall be
But as the shadow of His mighty hand,
And as the title-page of His great book,
Bearing in capitals the author's name ;
When its own thoughts shall all be good and pure
All holy, and all beautiful, and grand,
And claim a sisterhood and kinship with
The flowers that nestle on the heart of earth,
And those that golden the blue soil of heaven,
And each, like them, shall falteringly say
In tearful ecstasy, O God! O God !
Then shall the universe dissolve like wax,
Its mission and its purpose ended ; and
Man's thoughts shall be like God's thoughts, full of Him ;

And all the veils of matter shall be rent,
And He shine out in naked majesty,—
He—God—The Only One—sun-typed, star-typed,
But typified no longer, now that all
Mere representatives are understood,
Are fathom'd, and have answer'd their bright end ;—
He the sole sun, sole star. He all in all.
The Universal One—all great—all good.
He—the omniscient, omnipresent God !
To whom be praise and honour evermore,
Amen !

Ferdinand. Amen ! And if I understand
Thee rightly, thou wouldest say that all things here—
The earth, the moon, the stars, the universe,
And all that they contain, with all their laws—
Are but the representatives of God ;
Are nothing more than mirrors of His might,—
His ministers to each and all : and that
When the soul sees in them their aim and end,
Sees underneath the veil of things the God
Whose drapery they are, and utterance—
Sees that they preach Him in their laws and forms,
And are but as the glances of the eye
Revealing all the wealth of thought within ;—
And when the soul in turn, inform'd by these,
Becomes the manifestor of His rays,
And moonlike, is a reflex of His light,
Then shall the age of types and shadows cease,

The great Mosaic dispensation end ;
And the wide universe, with all its worlds—
Which, hitherto, was as a floating film
Upon the piercing splendour of the sun—
Shall melt into His smile, and disappear
Amid his glad Well Done, and welcomings :
And man with man, and soul with soul shall join
In a bright chain of everlasting love
Around His great white throne for evermore.
Is this thy thought, Alexis ?

Alexis. Yes, it is.

Ferdinand. Well, it is large at least, and may be true.
Meantime, what of those thoughts of ours that are
Concentrated in books, as light in diamonds ?

Alexis. True books are noble, for they all reveal
The bright side of the soul—that part which deals
With its own destinies, and which is light,
Like a high mountain-slope, when all beside
Is dark and cheerless.

Ferdinand. And all books are true
When they portray the soul unto itself,—
Either in pictures of its passions, or
In bright and beautiful impersonations
Of the grand features of the universe ?

Alexis. Yes. For the universe is to the soul
What a great brother is to a young sister.
They are related by the closest ties,
And whoso paints the one, must paint in part

The outline of the other.

Ferdinand. Yes, for both
Are children of one Parent. Canst thou tell
The nature of the charm that lies in books—
That charm that draws us towards them as the clouds
Draw light and vapour; and which makes us feel
As if we had lost all our life in theirs,
And yet remember'd most what we had lost ?

Alexis. I think I can. There is within the soul
A region of still waters, never stirr'd
But by the hands of angels,—a sweet spot
Left sacred to the Deity, which He,
Amidst the almost universal wreck,
Hath still reserved in mercy for Himself ;
A solemn grove still musical with song,—
An altar-fire still burning in the waste,—
A voice within that testifieth still,
In thrills of mute thanksgiving, to His grace.
And in this lake-like region all things bright
Are treasured and reflected, like the stars.
And in this grove all spirit-minstrels sing ;
And to this fire, all beauty adds a brand ;
And to this hushlike voice, all that is great
Gives utterance and power ;—and therefore we
Heave with the throes of a volcanic joy
When aught without us moves these holy deeps.
And as the soul is all-related, and
Gives one of her fair hands to things that be,

And with the other clasps the infinite,
And turns herself to this, and then to that,
It matters not from which the great shock comes
That flings the rainbow-globules dyed in heaven
Over the fretting wavelets of the time ;
And folds the bubbles and the dreams of earth
In grand gloom-mantles where the stars are hid
Like babies' toys in manhood's bright'ning dawn.
Whether from nature in her sweetest moods,
When she seems fresh from her Creator's hands,
Or from the fruitlike words of fellow men
That tell of years of ripening in the sun ;
It cannot matter from what quarter comes
The music which breathes o'er its hidden strings,—
The light that glitters in its sea-like eyes,—
So that it be awaken'd to a sense
Of its own greatness and its littleness ;
And have presented to it all the wealth
That lies beneath its moss-enamell'd soil,
Like the gold-coffin'd dust of kings beneath
The vulgar rubbish and the trash of time.
And if this come from nature, it is well ;
Or from the thoughts of other men, still well ;
And the soul rises into buoyancy,
Balloon-like, puff'd out with the gas of gods,—
Or as a maiden in the dew-sprent morn,
When her gold tresses are kiss'd by the winds ;
And, like an angel self-enamour'd, springs

To clasp the bright thing that is laughing on
The broken ripples of the running brook.

Ferdinand. Thou speakest in soul-pictures, yet I see
Thy meaning rising through them, free and simple
As a young princeling from the grand state-bed,
Where his white limbs have been enswathed all night
In gold and velvets. For thy thoughts reveal
Their own proportions through the gauzy robes
In which thou dost enshrine them ; and like eyes
Looking through golden bars, not one of all
Their glances but is sure to hit its mark.

Alexis. Books are man's worlds—his great attempts to
speak

The meaning of the oracle within :
And worlds are God's books in the which He writes
A memoir of Himself in love to man.
The highest aim of both is self-revealment—
Projection of internal truths in forms—
So that the soul may recognise itself,
And see in all the wonders it creates
A transcript of the fire-wrought characters
Playing upon the tablets in its heart.

Ferdinand. Thou speakest of great books. But what of
those
That come into the round and solid world
To show no more than their own emptiness ;
With nothing in them saving black and white,
And guiltless as a hedgehog of a thought,

Like Nothing folded carefully, and made
Into a parcel to send off by post,
Directed to Miss Moonshine.—
Those books that give droll portraitures of souls,
With jaws expanded to sublimest gape,
Crying out for the thought that cometh not,
Like little fledgelings in their hedge-row nests ;
But fancying the strange distension comes
From over-surges of the tide of song,
And not from want and hunger ?

Alexis. Even they
Have uses of their own, though these should be
But to engoggle eyes in wonderment,
That there should still be left mud-beds from which
Dust eddied out in clouds, although the skies
Shower truths down daily in soul-brimming streams !
Now if one could but fill them it were well,
For puddles sometime might reflect a star.

Ferdinand. Ah ! but they fancy that they all are full,
And blind you into instant proof of this
Whenever the wind comes.

Alexis. I saw two scenes
Once in my life. And in the one a boy
Bent down beside his mother, and he held
Her rounded hand in both his tiny ones.
It was a lovely hand, that of the mother,
And the boy kiss'd it, kiss'd it often ; and
One saw at once that all his little heart

Was on his peach-like lips the while he kiss'd ;
And when he kiss'd her, through the mother ran
A thrill of extasy.—I say he kiss'd
Her hand, transparent as the dawning East,
Again, and yet again,—then let it drop ;
And, looking up, his eyes fell full on hers,
And were like dew unto the sun-bleach'd grass.
His tearful eyes went tremblingly to hers,
And he said “ Mother ! ” And she started down
As though her soul had spoken to her heart ;
And he went on, and said, “ Mother, O Mother,
How I love thee ! ” And the sweet mother bent
And clasp'd him in her moon-like arms, and said
“ My boy ! O my dear boy ! ” And they were one
As earth and heaven are, when a rainbow drops
Like the Redeemer's blessing on them both.
And then she trail'd her hand amid his hair,
Like light in darkness, and threw o'er his neck,
His little rounded neck, a wreath of flowers,—
Forget-me-nots, and primroses, and heaths,
Fair as the boy, and simple as he was,—
And said “ My darling, go ! ” And the boy went.
Went to his mother's garden-bower and slept:
Slept and dreamt too. Dreamt of his mother's sire.
Dreamt of that Father whom she talk'd about—
That Father high in heaven. Ah, dreamt sweet dreams !
And when he grew to be a man—this boy—
He went into the world, and said strange things,

For oh! words fell from him like honeydrops,
Telling of summer, and of flowers, and bees—
He had dwelt much with them. Some laugh'd; some wept;
And some, with shaking of an empty head
Said that the man was mad. Still he went on
And wedded things that seem'd wide-sunder'd, and
Bound them by vows to altars in the skies.
And when at last he died, the stars seem'd dimmer,
Oh, dimmer far than when the bright one lived ;
And the streams murmur'd with a sadder sound,
And went like mourners to the widow'd sea ;
And the fair landscape seem'd to miss the hues
Of summer, and dwelt ever in the shade ;
And hearts were dark and gave a bell-like tone,
As though they all struck twelve o'clock at night,
With not a promise ever to reach one ;
And all the legacy he left behind
Was—simple words. But they were rich as suns ;
And if you loved, and look'd on them, they gleam'd
Like dewdrops with a moonbeam in their hearts,
And if you tried to crush them in the hand
They did not die ; or if they seem'd to die,
'Twas only that they might reveal a soul
So pure and lovely that you welcomed it
With a heart-bounding joy, as saints do those
Whom they have handed to their thrones in heaven.
Oh! if they seem'd to die, be sure it was
But the mock death of roses in the night,

When they seal up their shell-like lips in sleep,—
In a most beauteous sleep, whose very dreams
Are odours and unutterable sweets.

And then I saw another scene : A boy—
Not like the other, either in the grace
Of his heart-mirror'd features, or the glance,
The soul-like glance, of his star-streaming eyes—
Stood near his mother, and bent not. Not he !
But stood bolt upright as a wintry pine,
And turn'd towards her with a sneering face,—
Already flush'd with a self-propping trust,
Round as an apple, laughing at the sun,—
Stood and bent not. Oh, no ! And said at last,
“ Mother, I hate thee, for thou art a fool ! ”
And went off laughing at his witless jest ;
Went off, and came not near again for hours.
And when at length he grew to be a man,
He too went forth into the world and talk'd ;
Said much that made the people laugh, but none
Were ever known to weep at what he said.
He had no heart himself, and could not touch
The sluggish well-springs of another's heart.
Ah, well ! He was like water in a cave
That never was a mirror to the light.
And when at last he died, the stars smiled on,
Smiled at each other through the happy blue
As they had done before ; and the bright streams

Went on as brightly towards the crisping sea,
That talk'd in ripples of its coral caves,
And all the wealth barbaric of its halls ;
And the fair landscape, like a golden bowl
Fill'd to the flower-wreaths of the bubbled brim,
Whose wine was sunshine, seem'd for ever steep'd
In trancelike dreams of its own blessedness.
And not a heart was darken'd by his death,
Or bell-like toll'd the hour of his interment ;
But all were still as town-clocks, when the hands
Rest on the half-past two of summer days ;
And all the legacy he left behind
Was, like the other—words. Ah, empty words !
Hard husks and rinds, with not a kernel in them.
And if you tried to crush *them* in the hand
They yielded not, but were as adamant.
Pound them ; they gave out dust,—but nothing more.
And so he died—and, I believe, was buried !

Ferdinand. And “*requiescat*,” and so on. But still
One must indulge a laugh at the expense
Of those who, scorning nature's godlike rule,
Frame laws unto themselves ;—those who are lost
Amidst the mists and mirages of self,
Which they project before them on all things :—
Those everlasting smirkers whom nought wins
From their self-worship and idolatries ;
Who think and speak as though they were commission'd
To preach their vanity before all worlds,

And lay upon the altars of all minds
An offering to their little emptiness ;
Whose thoughts are vapid as small beer uncork'd ;
Whose words are blown like bubbles till they burst ;
Who talk of great things with an easy air,
As though to *talk* of them were to be great.

Alexis. Whoso writes "thunder" is a thunderer,
And he who spelleteth "lightning" is a god !—

Ferdinand. Who get chin-deep into the mud, and cry
Behold the deeps ! the deeps ! Who spout their rhymes
Into the people's ears, as though they were
The morning chimes of all the great world-bells
In God's cathedral, the wide universe,
Calling all men to prayer—

Alexis. Alas ! Alas !
Tell them to keep their heads still—all will cease,
For they are but the jingles of the bells
That pendant-wise embellish their fools' caps.

Ferdinand. Who vent high-sounding words instead of
thoughts,
And seem unconscious that they are not one.

Alexis. Great words come from great mouths, not from
great minds !

Ferdinand. Who would reduce all things to empty sound,
And, did the process answer, would confine
All beauty to their verses, which, drum-like,
Return mad volleys of a vague uproar,
Devoid of music and of meaning both ;—

Whose lines seem waiting for a lusty voice
To shout them into utterance and life—
Louder the better—

Alexis. Sound is the soul
Of sense, of course, and therefore they are right !

Ferdinand. Who utter their foul blasphemies in print,
Appealing to the weak side of our race,
And batten on corruption like the crows.

Alexis. Ah ! Let us bury both—them and their food—
Out of our sight, and out of memory ;—
The old dead skull, and the yet living worm
That wriggles in the caverns of its eyes !

SCENE IV.—*A Boudoir. Night.*

FERDINAND and CAROLINE.

Caroline. Come Ferdinand, now tell me, pray,
Why thou hast thus prolong'd thy stay
From days to weeks, from weeks to months ;—
Or art thou happier when away ?
If so, sir, you may leave me now !
I cannot bear an absent brow,
And eyes fix'd in a vacant stare
As yours are, on that empty chair.
Only one half of you seems here,
The other may be anywhere ;—
Up in the air for ought I know

Helping the cloud nymphs to make snow :
Or at the bottom of the sea
Wondering where all its mermaids be.
But tell me truly now, I pray—
Such knowledge doth to me belong—
Why thou didst go from me, and stay,
Or staying,—why so long ?

Ferdinand. O Caroline, it matters not.
Thou art not, canst not, be forgot ;
For wheresoever I may be,
My heart and soul are both with thee.

Caroline. What ! When I know that both were spent
On Saturn and on red-hair'd Mars ?—

Ferdinand. Yes. For Night's brow, like thine, is bent
But to reveal its wealth of stars.
So let thine bend, my love, no longer,
Thou canst not make thy beauty stronger ;
And smile upon me once again,
Like sunshine through a shower of rain.
There ! That will do ! Those arch, dark eyes
With every glance seem ever proving
The peerless beauty, or the bliss,
The bliss and beauty both, of loving.

Caroline. Ah ! but thou hast not answer'd yet
The question which I just have ask'd thee ;
Dost think, then, I so soon forget
The naughtiness with which I've task'd thee ?
Come tell me where thou hast been roving,—

Thou who hast sung the bliss of loving.

Ferdinand. To those who love there is no absence.

Thine image holds me like the air ;

Whether I wander or I rest—

Goes and rests with me everywhere.

To those who love, the universe,

Like a great heart, is ever beating ;

And every strong pulsation keeps

The one dear loved name still repeating.

To those who love, all moments are

Like cloudlets veiling o'er a star ;

And everything in nature seems

Emparadised in golden dreams.

To those who love, all loveliness

Is but the image of the grace

That mantles o'er the one loved form ;—

Is but a mirror of her face.

Day sings her name with thousand tongues,

And night the echo still prolongs ;

Flowers breathe it to their mother earth ;

Leaves lisp it by the light winds shaken ;

Sighs gasp it to the heaving breast ;

Tears tell it when they do but waken ;

Dews hold it in their trembling souls ;

Birds trill it to the morn and even ;

Streams tell it to their flowery banks ;

And star-beams write it over heaven.

All nature is but as a scroll,

With thy name filling up the whole.
And I, and my best friend, have been
Scanning the universe but now ;—
He, thinking of I know not what,
I, thinking of thy pearl-like brow.
I cannot give his thoughts to thee ;
But, Carry, I can give thee mine,—
Perchance he read another name,
But I saw, dearest, only thine.

Caroline. There that will do. Thy verses, Ferdinand,
Are getting rather watery, like sea-sand.
Thy Pegasus hath gone quite out of breath ;
Check him in time, or it may prove his death !

Ferdinand. Hold wicked one ! The dimples in thy face
Might well provoke him to another race.
Little love-cells they appear,
Large enough to hold a tear.
But what should *he* do—little stranger—
In those velvet halls of smiles ?
His poor life would be in danger
From a thousand witty wiles.
They would pinch him till he vanish'd
O'er the soft and peachy brim ;
They would fold him in love-garlands
Till he could no longer swim.
They would smother him with blossoms ;
They would press him with a kiss,
Till his life went like a seraph

In a rainbow-robe of bliss.—
A tear could never live
On those fair cheeks of thine,—
It would vanish like a dewdrop
In the day-god's cup of wine.
It would melt off like an icedrop
Laid upon a burning bar ;—
It would die out in that sunlight
Like a little patient star.

Caroline. Better and better, Ferdinand ! I vow
That is much better than “ thy pearl-like brow.”
But are my dimples all ? Have I no more
Of all the wares of beauty in my store ?
I thought now I had got a pair of eyes,—
And a nose too, or else my mirror lies !
Then, I believe, I have a pair of lips,
And eke a neck, on which my black hair dips.

Ferdinand. Dips like darkness on a snow-wreath
Resting on a mountain-side,
Which it glooms, but cannot cover ;
Which it veils, but cannot hide.
Dips like brown bees on a lily,
Which they cannot darken quite ;
But which seemeth for their presence
All the fairer, purer white.
Then thy eyes are like the heavens
When no cloud their beauty mars,
And their lovely deeps are lighted

By a countless host of stars.
Oh ! thy eyes are dark, my beauty,
But one has not long to seek
For the light that cometh from them,
Like the morning from a peak,—
For the light that is within them,
And whose depths it does not break,—
Pure and lovely as a swan's neck
On a deep and shadowy lake.
Then thy lips are like the splendours
Which the Northern climes adorn
When the ruby tints of evening
Meet the ruddy hues of morn.
Oh ! thy lips are rich and lustrous,
As though the sun had just caressed them ;
But one cannot speak their beauty
Till one has—just thus—thus—pressed them !

Caroline. There ! if thy breath is not already spent
Thou oughtest to grow grandly eloquent,
For on these silly waxen lips of mine
If my glass tells me truly, there is wine
Would turn a harder, heavier head than thine !
But, Ferdinand, be serious now, I pray ;
Think not I am that ever foolish thing
Who can give heed unto the lightest lay,
And believe all that flattering voices sing.
O, Ferdinand, I have a heart and mind !
The one to seek, the other to love duty,—

A soul akin to all that is refined
In the wide realms of wisdom, love, and beauty.

Ferdinand. I know it, dearest ; therefore, I
Bring to thee no feignèd sigh.

I know it, love, and therefore bring
Only pure drops from the spring,
The inner fount of feeling.

All the words I have been speaking
To reveal my soul's delight,
Are as true as daylight breaking
On the darksome dreams of night.

All the figures I've been using—
Though it might seem but in play—
Fit thee, dearest, just as well as
Garlands fit the Queen of May.

Caroline. I know that thou dost love me, Ferdinand,
And therefore think all thou sayest true ;
For love, without belief, is but waste sand
Compared with all the star-wealth of heaven's blue.

Ferdinand. Yes, I love thee ! Can I help it
When thou art as dear to me
As the ruby-breasted robin
To a leafless, wintry tree ?
Oh thou art the one wine-bubble
On the goblet of my life !
Oh, thou art the one sweet rainbow
Bending o'er the clouds of strife !
Oh, thou art the spring's glad smiling

While the glooms of Winter linger !
Warm as living kisses lavished
On a dead man's pallid finger.

Caroline. There, take that rose-bud with its leaves tight
 pressed,
Keep it but one short hour upon thy breast
And all its beauty will melt out of sight,
Like a wing vanishing in clouds of light.
There ! Take it—type of all that we caress—
Poor hackneyed type of human loveliness !

Ferdinand. Oh, Caroline ! the future ever seemeth
To us, who on the barren present stand,
Like a great rose-tree brightly beaming
In God's right hand,
Grand and entire, where nothing is amiss,
A perfect globe of concentrated bliss.
And all our happy dreams and moments are
The scattered leaflets from this flower-star,
Coming to us, one by one,
Till the last poor leaf is gone ;
And the stem all stripped and withered
Is the present in our hand,
While the rose-leaves dead and buried
Lie beneath us in the sand ;
And we wonder, wonder always
Why our great and heavenly Sire
Did not give us the bright fragrance—
Did not give it us entire ;

Wonder that he let us pluck it
Till its beauty was no more,
Till there was no other future
Than a bleak, unhappy shore ;
Till we gather up our life-hopes
In a single shivering breath,
And exclaim, Ah, me ! how goodly
And how fair a thing is death !

Caroline. Nay, believe me, Ferdinand,
There are no moments such as those—
No moments when the future does not hold
Some opiate for our woes ;
For when earth hath donned her mantle
Of funereal snows,
Another Spring, another Summer,
Bringeth another rose.
And when we weary of this round
Of good, and bright, and fair,
And when our hearts are but the echo
Of a whispered prayer,
And when all time seems but the shadow
Of a rich, ripe Autumn even—
Ah ! when we tire of earth,
We turn ourselves towards heaven !

SCENE V.—*A Large Chamber. Moonlight.*

EDITH *sitting alone.*

Edith. And thus the endless round goes ever on,
Unceasing woe, unwearied weariness ;
No pause ; no rest ; but ever aching motion—
Uncheck'd propulsion of a broken limb !
And still the world doth drag me at its wheel
Over the miry ways and sloughs of time,—
A thing half dead, with weary arms astretch
For anything to cling to out of this
Perpetual whirl and vortex of mad life.
Ah me ! My hours are like a warrior's trophies,—
Nothing but skulls that speak but of the past :
My days are like long feverish dreams, and I
The dreamer, in the arms of nightmares. Ah !
The earth is very wretched, or I am—
It matters not which. For ever since the day
When I first knew I loved him, and that he
Worshipp'd another, I have been as now—
Hopeless and aimless, loveless and alone.
And my too passionate soul, without disguise
Hath stretchèd forth its wither'd arm and held
My torn and cinder'd heart within its hand,
Crying unto the giddy world, Lo here !
Here is a trophy of that bright thing love—

Bright it may be, but 'tis a scorcher—Look !
But he—he knows not of my poor affection,
Nor shall he know it till I am no more.
And when will that be ? O my soul, when, when ?
This is the question that I ever ask,
And which all fair things ever ask of me.
Daily the Morn, my sweet young sister, comes
With her round face, and peers into my eyes,
And, with a look of pitying wonder, says
Thou here yet, Edith ? Get thee to thy grave !
And nightly, Darkness steals on tiptoe, and
Whispers my soul to go and rest with her.
Rest ? Yes ! how gladly.—There is no rest here.
All things are weary of their life. I am.
Yet all live on ; yes, live and move ; and climb
Up toppling crags and peaks with mangled limbs,
Longing to plunge into the dark abyss,
But held back still by too, too cruel hands.
The flowers all die when winter comes, but I—
Although the earth to me is one wide waste—
A winter with no spring at hand, still live ;
And, like a dead leaf whirling at a wheel,
Flap in the face of all, my wither'd life.
All things seem'd mantled in a sad unrest—
No quiet,—none ! day after day the sun
Showeth his broad bright face, as though he mock'd
The very woe which is consuming him.
Day after day he cometh with his gleams

Like a great glittering lie. For know we not
That the black spots upon his disk reveal—
Spite of his beamy looks and shows of joy—
That he too has a dark, scorched heart within.
And the poor moon—how pale she looks—how sad !
And Oh ! how weary. She's no hypocrite.
Not she ! Wan, woe-worn moon ! And then the stars
Trembling up there, upon thy great swart face
O infinite, all longing to drop down,
Only that woe has blister'd them in fire,
In pallid fire upon thy weary cheeks !
Night is the only time, alas ! when there
Is any show of rest,—when all things don
Their black wo-mantles, and seem what they are,—
All dark ! All dark ! When will this mocking light,
This still recurring eye-ache have an end ?
Ah when ? There is that clock still ticking there,
Prating of time for ever. I am sick
Of listening to it as I have for nights,
When all was still, and rain no longer beat
In gusty fury on the window-panes ;
And I have said unto myself, O Time,
When, when shall I have done with thee, Arch-Woe ?
Ah ! I have thought, and thought, until my brain
Whirl'd like the Jotun-halls—the Jornumgandus
Of the bleak North ; and all its giddy thoughts,
Like the Mad Giants in their spinning prison,
Thundered against the reeling sides, and called

Aloud, but all in vain, for egress. Oh !
It is a weary, weary thing to live,
And wish to die ;—to be a flower within
The hard, cold gripe of Death, which he in sport
Seems ever pulling at, but will not pluck ;
To feel the cold trail of the worm in life—
Coffined, but sentient still—and have your heart
Crying out ever to your tortured soul,
In pity to release its hold, and go :
And yet it goes not, but remaineth still,
Dangling like Absalom, by the tangled hair.
Oh ! for some great good hand to sheer it off,
And let me sleep beneath the toll of bells !
But this is wickedness—profanity !
Have mercy on me, O my God, for I
Would rather die a thousand thousand deaths,
Than earn Thy just and most tremendous frown !
It is this sad repining that reveals,
In spite of all my plaints, my love of earth ;
And yet I love it not. Oh no ! Oh no !
Then why do I thus plunge a fester'd hand
Into its dust, and then complain of pain ?
Oh ! Let me rather keep my eye on heaven.
And then, when I am fit to die, I shall.
How can I die ? How can I go to heaven,
When one half of my bleeding soul
Is spent in pitying the other.—How ?
The very memory of all my woes

Is that which binds me firmly to them still.

But I will pray :

O, Thou Almighty One !

Thou knowest I am weak, but Thou art strong.

Assist me, I beseech Thee, to forget,

And to remember both. May I forget

The earth, and all my sorrows, and recline

Upon Thy faithful bosom evermore.

Teach me, O Lord ! to cast my soul on Thee ;

To fling the burden of my heart away,

And soar upon the golden plumes of praise ;

To clasp the ripen'd fruits of Paradise,

And sun my faint and world-stung soul in heaven.

Oh ! I am weary, Lord ! Give me thy rest,

My Father ! Thou art merciful, I know.

Mine is the blame that I am not with Thee.

For if my soul had been too pure for earth

Thou would'st have taken it unto Thyself.

Purge me, O Lord, and make my spirit free

From all world-taints, and wishes vain and void.

Give me, as my companion, a bright hope,

With finger ever pointing to the skies,

And plucking, as a balm for all my woe,

Stray flowerets from the wreath which waits me yet

In thy great golden halls, O Mighty One !

These reminiscences of sorrow are

The cables which retain my soul in port.

Loosen them, Lord ; and let my spirit start

On her bright, boundless voyage up to Thee,
Over the track of moonbeams, and the trail
Of sorrow-mocking stars. Remove regret—
This vain regret, O Lord; and make my soul
A thing too bright to reflect aught but Thee.
Assist me still to look, as I have done
Often and often, to the great reward
Which Thou still holdest in thy mighty hand
For all who triumph over sin and death.
And may sweet peace descend upon my soul—
Soft as the sleep of moonbeams on a lake,
Bright as the breath of morning over earth—
That peace which is the dawning love of God,
Destined to ripen into day in heaven.
O God, I bless thee that I feel this now.
May it continue with me as a star,
One sole star with a dark and cloudy night,
Which she seems ever folding to her heart,
Like a lone widow her poor one last babe.
Teach me to bow to thy most holy will;
Teach me the glorious gift of waiting, Lord;
Ever to stretch my weary hands towards Thee,
Till Thou in mercy sayest, “It is enough,
Poor troubled spirit. Come up hither, thou,”
And stretchest forth Thy great sun-girdled arm
To take me to my mother and Thyself.
And O, my God, bless *him*—Alexis—he
Who is the unconscious cause of all my woe;

Bless him, and that fair child, his Flora, and
May they be dear unto each other, Lord,
As moonlight is to starlight. May they live
Enfolded in Thy grace, as planets are
In the far-streaming splendour of their suns.
Girdle them round with love as Spring with flowers,
Or as Orion with his starry belt.
And may they rest in peace, as sunbeams on
Still rivers. May they never, never know
That wearing of the heart which I have felt;
And may they be upraised to heaven by bliss,
And not be pointed there, like me, by woe.
Guard them, O God, and let their path be light,
And let their life be golden, like the strings
From which Thou drawest melody in heaven;
And still upon the round of all their joys
May they see written Thy Almighty name;
And may their death be like a sweet repose,
Unbroken but by joy unspeakable,
Like music breaking on a starry night.
Bless them; and bless the world. O may it rest
In peace upon Thy bosom, like a ship
On the unrippled silver of the sea,
Or like a green tree in the circling blue
Of the bright joyousness of summer morns.
May all its nations learn Thy love and praise.
May all its laws be equity and good.
May all its hearts be shrines for Thine and Thee;

And all its ransomed souls dwell in Thy smile,
Like the white snow of wave-crowns in the light.
O, may the world be holy, till its breast
Glows like a seraph's, filled with love of Thee ;
Till its bright shining orbit be a ring
Round the forefinger of Thy mighty hand,
And earth the gemmed love-token on its sphere
Whose being is to be kissed out in bliss,
Like a star melting in the arms of morn,
By Thee, Almighty One—while all its souls
Pass like the pomp of triumph into heaven !
And O, bless me, my Lord : and let me rest
Upon Thy love, even as a cloud on heaven,
Or as a shadow on still waters ; and
To Thee, Thee only with Thy blessed Son,
And with the Holy Spirit be the praise
Now, and for evermore, O God !

Amen.

[She rises : after a long pause.]

Oh, what a mighty power resides in prayer !
Whose voice, however lowly it may be,
Winds round the diamond halls and thrones of heaven
In music, to the ear of God Himself ;
And whose uplifted hands are press'd by His
In token of forgiveness and of love.
Now can I see that all the world is fair,
Is in herself most bright and beautiful ;
Although for me she never wreathes a smile ;

For light-lipped, lovely wanton as she is,
She kisses none who kiss her not again.
Now can I see that I have lived alone
With my own sorrow, and that, like the night,
Gazing upon her image in the seas,
Have said, How dark those sunless waters are !
For I have kept my weary eye still fix'd
Upon the shadow of my soul till now,
When God hath turned it towards the shining sun,
That, bath'd in laughing lustre, gleam'd behind.

SCENE VI.—*A Subterranean Cavern. Torchlight.*

SPIRITS OF DARKNESS.

ALL.

Sisters, sisters, gather round us !
Shake the cavern's rocky floor !
We have triumph now before us ;
We have treasure evermore.
Hell is winning ! Earth is spinning,
Like a moth around its fate ;
And the trophies grow and gather
Round the Doom-world's ebon gate.
Hark ! the doors of hell are clang ing,
Ever wheeling to and fro,
And the fiend's dark banner flutters
Proudly, o'er the world of wo,

For his subjects bow before him,
 Crowding millions at a time ;—
Heaven is fading ; earth is dwindling ;
 Hell is ripening towards the prime,
And another soul is given us,
 To torment, and tempt, and try ;
We will rack him till he wishes
 To be quit of us—and die !

SPIRIT OF GLOOM.

And I will gather horrors round his head,—
 Wild shapes of awe and gloom ;
And he shall wake at night with shivering dread
 In his own lonely room ;
And gaze out wildly into utter night—
 No shining star at hand—
And feel himself a solitary soul
 In a most silent land ;
A solitary pilgrim in the world,
 A stranger to the fair,
Whom all things lovely shall regard with hate,
 Or an unfriendly stare ;—
Till he shall wish the gloomy grave would ope
 Its dark, flesh-soddened door,
And let him draw the bars of memory,
 And think, and feel, no more !

SPIRIT OF MYSTERY.

Shadows shall cover him,
 Shadows and clouds ;
Dead things shall haunt him—
 Corpses, and shrouds.
All shall be mystery,
 Foeman, and friend,
Rapture, and torment,
 Life, and its end.—
All shall be mystery,
 Ball-room and fair,
City, and solitude,
 Heaven, earth, and air.
Nought shall be *real*,
 All but a *seeming* ;
Hell, but a mockery ;
 Heaven, a dreaming ;
Nature, a nightmare ;
 Man, but a song ;
Love, a misgiving ;
 Hate, a fool's wrong.
Friendship, a folly ;
 Enmity, vain ;
Pleasure, a tickle ;
 Littleness, pain ;
Loveliness, nothingness ;
 Beauty, a sigh ;

NIGHT AND THE SOUL.

Virtue, the flicker
On a dead eye !
Good, dust and ashes ;
Evil, a sound ;
All, a dazed swimming
In a mad round.
Life, but a shadow,
Death, but a gloom ;
All—but the cross-bones
Over a tomb !

SPIRIT OF DOUBT.

And he shall doubt of all he sees,
And all in heaven and earth be dark ;
And science be but as a breeze,
Fanning a dead face, cold and stark ;
And knowledge be but emptiness,
And truth a vapour o'er a fen ;
And evermore he shall revolve
The Why, the Wherefore, and the When !
And he shall vainly question life,
And vainly ask the truth of death ;
For all shall be a silent blank—
Empty as air—light as a breath :
The very shadows of the trees,
The fickle wind's words to the leaf,
The glory on the Summer seas
Shall be more fix'd than his belief ;

And he shall doubt his friend's warm clasp,
And doubt the kind gleam in his eye ;
He shall doubt all of light and bliss,
And believe only in a sigh.

SPIRIT OF DREAD.

Terrors shall cover him,
Terrors and dread,—
Shapeless things hovering
Over his head.
Fear shall encompass him
Round and beneath,
Coming up from
The kingdom of Death.
He shall have shiverings
When we pass by,—
Darest heart quakings
Knowing not why.
He shall see thunder-clouds
Pass o'er his mind,—
See the red lightnings
Leaping behind.
Horrible Phlegethons
He shall still mark,
He shall look into
The Thulean dark :—
Look through the fire-bars
Into the cell,—

Hear the chains clank
On the floor of Hell.
In sleep he shall wander
By gloom-haunted streams ;
Fiends' eyes shall glare at him
Through his long dreams :
Cold hands shall clasp his,
Breaking his rest ;
Slimy snakes nestle
Warm in his breast.
Terrors shall move him
As tempests shake ships ;
Doom-words shall haunt him,—
Rush to his lips.
He shall be fill'd
With dread and affright ;
Night shall be horror,
Day be as night !

ALL.

Sisters, Sisters gather round us !
Shake the cavern's rocky floor !
We have triumph now before us,
We have treasure evermore.
Hell is winning ! Earth is spinning
Like a moth around its fate ;
And the trophies grow, and gather
Round the Doom-world's ebon gate.

Hark ! the doors of Hell are clang—
 Ever wheeling to and fro ;
And the fiend's dark banner flutters
 Proudly o'er the world of woe.
 For his subjects bow before him,—
 Crowding millions at a time.
 Heaven is fading, Earth is dwindling,
 Hell is ripening towards the prime :
 And another soul is given us
 To torment and tempt and try ;—
 We will rack him, till he wishes
 To be quit of us—and die.

MINISTERING SPIRIT.

Hell may plot, but Heaven plans ;
 Devils pull, but angels shoot ;
 And God bringeth forth a flower
 From a foul and rotten root.
 Bringeth light from out of blackness ;
 Maketh evil hidden good ;
 Changeth foulness into beauty ;
 Turneth poison into food.
 Though the stream that bubbleth from ye,
 May be black as hell itself,
 It shall issue in His glory,
 It shall mirror forth Himself.
 Ye the moles are underground,
 Stirring at the roots of flowers ;—

He, the sun that shineth on them
Through the golden summer hours ;
Ye are slaves unto *yourselves*,—
Servants of the mighty God ;
And the mire ye cast around ye
Maketh fruitfuller the sod :
And the stones ye throw at virtue
Fall as pearl-gems at its feet ;
And your thorns are turn'd to roses,
And your bitter into sweet.
Not a devil mutters curses
But a light-brow'd seraph sings ;
Not a fiend flies, but an angel
Laugheth underneath his wings ;
Not an evil thing is dandled
On the Devil's knotted knee,
But a smile breaks over heaven
At the new-born harmony.
For all evil is the wrappage
And the husk of some great good—
Is the Devil's ware and dishes
Which God filleth with sweet food.
And your grim, old, black, sin-goblets
Shall be brimm'd with richest wine ;
And all evil things shall vanish,
And be lost in the Divine !

EVIL SPIRITS.

But the soul that now is given us
To torment, and tempt, and try,—
We will rack until he wishes
To be quit of us—and die !

MINISTERING SPIRIT.

But the soul that now is given you
To torment, and tempt, and try,
Shall come from you bright as glances
From a merry, laughing eye ;
Shall come luminous as moonbeams
Through a rack of clouds and glooms,
And triumphant as bright spirits
Winging upward from their tombs.
Not a trap you shall lay for him,
But a treasure he shall find ;
Not a cloud shall ever haunt him,
But a star shall lurk behind ;
Not a tempest, but a rainbow
Shall its cloudy glooms beguile ;
And your woes shall serve as pillow
To a bright and infant smile !

SCENE VII.—*A Room looking upon a Public Street. Night.*

ALEXIS alone.

Whence come these dark misgivings—this strange dread—
These sudden chills, and creepings of a fear
I never felt till now; as though the heavens
Were muttering silent thunders o'er my head,
Too black to meet the eye of God; too deep
For heaven, with all its stars, to hear and live?
Has the great evil woven round my soul
A spell of Pandemonium, and a shroud
Framed of the glooms and horrors that surround
His gleaming palace-home, like smoke round fire,
That I should feel thus namelessly immersed,
. Baptised in horrent shadows and dim dreads?
Why do I feel so lonely in the world?
Is the great charnel tenantless, and I
The one sole living thing amid its bones,
Its faded velvets, and its rotten biers?

My riven soul is like a world destroyed,
Filled with still smoking craters, lava-washed,
Strewn o'er with sand, all smoke-imbrown'd and burnt,
With bright fire-splinters lighting up the waste.
My very light is darkness; and my hopes
All turn'd to ashes of a fire extinct;
And joys descend upon me, like snow-flakes

Upon a sable robe—soon melting off,
Bright but by contrast—leaving spots behind !

My heart hath shed its pleasures, like a horse
Its midnight rider, that still plungeth on,
Champing the darkness through the narrow lanes,
Thick set with thorns : on, on unto a land
Of hungry pitfalls, and all-gulphing night.

Flora! my Flora! Oh that thou wert here
To pillow my sad head upon thy breast;
And with its heavings shake my achings off.
For thou wouldest be to me as light from Heaven
Shining through dungeon-grates on living eyes ;
Wouldst melt the ice about my heart, like Spring,
And let the flowers all flush up into life ;
Wouldst trample on the glooms around my soul,
Like daylight upon darkness ; and the prints
Of thy sweet feet would be like stars at night,
Or like bright primroses on sun-burnt banks ;
Thy voice would hush the clamours of my soul,
Turning them all to music ; and thine eyes,
With all their meek love-glances, would infuse
A holy light into my life, like that
Which shakes the darkness from the chisell'd forms
In burial vaults, and shows the prayer-clasp'd hands,
The patient attitude and upturn'd eye.
O wert thou with me, I might yet be blessed !

My heart would then be all rimmed round with light.
Thy love would hang upon it, like the moon
On heaven's dark concave through a Winter's night ;
And I should go on singing through the world,
Like mountain streams in June, all laughingly,
And rippled o'er with dimples ; and my life
Would be like bees in sultry Summer time,
Brown-barred, but rich and rough with jagged gold.

But as it is, I feel too much alone.
My life is but a phantom-dream, and I
Am nothing but a shadow among things,
Gliding through Time,—a Night without a star.
For I have been a worshipper of thought,
Until thoughts are my only store of wealth,—
Mere scintillations, like the Northern lights,
Bright without warmth, leaving no after-prints,
Like mighty deeds, whose vestiges remain
When they are not. Therefore this discontent,
This yearning want, this wide vacuity.

All things reproach, and all admonish me.
The outer world is real ; but that within
Is—nay, I am wearied out with saying what !
We stretch our arms, and clasp an empty void ;
We search for truth, and lo ! the infinite ;
We seek the soul of beauty, and behold
A skull ! We question all things of the life

That is within them :—they return blank stares.
Perpetual seekers, but without success,
We dive down into the inane profound,
Groping for that we never, never touch ;
While merry nature laughs us in the face,
And with her every smile repeats, “ Thou fool ! ”

Oh ! I have flung me at a mountain’s foot
In the still moonlight, and have wept aloud
At my own littleness and vanity.
“ Thou a philosopher, forsooth ! ” I said,
“ What hast thou found in that dim world of thine,
Aught half so true and stable as this hill ? ”
And there it stood, lifting its jagged peak
Proudly aloft into the azure dark,
Fronting the universe, and welcoming,
With rugged bluffness, the coquettish light
That danced with child-like glee about its head,
Folding its robe of pines around its breast—
A stately, proud, strong *something* in the world,
And not like me, a poor, soul-sicklied thought !

And I have gone out in the winter’s storms,
And felt the winds all smite me in the face,
And writhed beneath the buffetings of hail,
And heard the creaking branches of the trees
Groan out their “ Shame ! ” upon me as I pass’d,
And gone home, like an idler, to his meal.

And I have met the Summer, fill'd with shame,
Have seen her fling her bright, transparent robe—
Her woof of sunbeams o'er the ruddy West,
And gather round her her grand veil of stars ;
Have seen her, when she first awoke at morn,
Marshal her pageantry around her steps,
And come upon the semi-sleeping world
Chanting loud pœans unto God on high,
With sad heart-shudders, and with self-reproach.
And I have seen the Spring come slanting up,
Looking askance, half veiling her sweet face,
Like pouting beauties frowning on their charms ;
As if she feared her beaming looks would blind
And madden half the shivering world, if she
Came up from her bright realm too suddenly ;
Have seen her nimble fingers spin the leaves
That were to mantle half the happy year
In greenery ; and watched her as she went
Smiling upon her little family
Of early flowers, with thoughts that were akin
To anguish—till she wrapped her garments round,
And, with a smile, went off into the blue ;
Leaving the Summer to complete the task,
The handicraft of love she had begun.

And I have seen the long-loved Autumn come
Red-faced and jovial o'er the waving corn ;
Have seen the orchards bend beneath his wealth,

And ancient barns look pursy with their stores,
Have seen him with remorse, and heard him say
“ Where are thy treasures, friend ? Hast aught to show ?
Is the world better for thy being ? Come !
Empty thy pockets—fling *thy* apples out ! ”
And gone off, saying to myself,
“ My garden is a worthless waste as yet,
Growing but two things only—namely weeds,
And sickly plants that never yet have flower'd.”

I am disgusted both with my pursuits
And with myself. What have I done for any living thing
That I should still live on among the rest,
And draw up nourishment from all around
Yielding no increase—not a fruit or flower,
Or brightening presage, or young, round soul-bud
As promises of growing after-wealth,
But sad and uttermost sterility.
'Tis true that I have thought. But to what end ?
I have been plunging in the depths of being,
Seeking for knowledge that I never found,
While the sweet upper world has been at work,
Each doing, and each suffering for the whole.

All things have been enigmas unto me,
And I have spent my soul in their solution ;
Leaving them all but unsolved riddles still ;—
Have gone into the outer world of thought,

And come back empty-handed, like the rest,
Bearing an unwise blank upon my face—
A look of wonder at the universe—
And the young streams have laugh'd at me in sport,
And gone on prattling their sweet Summer talk,
Saying unto me, “Dreamer! make a song.
Thou wilt not work. Do something. Thou canst sing.
Strike us a note or two from those long strings
Of under-harmony thou must have touched,
And tell us *why* the world is as it is;
Or give us a slight hint about the soul.
Thou art a player in the universe :
Give us thy part, for thou hast studied it.
The world is but a drama, full of acts ;
We are but actors in the ‘make up’ scenes ;
While thou—friend—thou hast stood on the stage-front,
And hadst the noblest passages to speak ;
But this thou didst disdain : for thy great soul
Could never brook to act another’s thought
Unquestion’d,—though that other was thy God !
But thou—of course—must needs be critic too.
Well, friend ! What of the plot ? What of the plot ?
Is it ‘all true to nature,’—and so forth ?
Thou canst not have been idle all this time,—
Thou surely hast a word to say—speak out ! ”

Thus all things banter me ; and my own heart
Adds venom to the sting. For all my days

Have gone like dreamless sleeps—deep questionings,
Whose answers were but questions deeper still.

Thus hath all been a bootless want of faith,
A querulous negation in the world,
And “ Question ” is the upshot of it all.
Grand consummation this of all my hopes !
Most glorious product of a life of toil !
An empty vat refuseth to be filled,
Because, forsooth, it knows not why it should !
A stubborn harpstring will not yield a sound,
Though its own maker’s finger striketh it ;
Because—oh ! I could laugh in bitterness—
It knows not all the laws of harmony !
The finite finds it cannot comprehend
The infinite—and grumbles doleful things !

Oh ! I have play’d the fool unto myself ;
Have tried in vain to clutch the burning stars,
And left the fruit to rot within my grasp ;
Have said unto the measureless, “ My friend ! ”
And left my true friend knocking at the door ;
Have striven after the impossible,
And left the bright, imperishable gem
To gather darkness underneath my feet.
Fool ! Fool that I have been ! Vain empty fool !
Believing nothing that I could not grasp,
Calling all false, I could not understand,

Seeking the inner laws that bind all things,
And treating with contempt the things themselves
Staring adown the vistas of the soul
In hope of seeing truth, and gazing up
With most impotent eye and feeble mind
The infinite expanse to find out God,
While He, in act of friendship, laid His hand
Upon my arm, until I shook him off.
The truth that came to me unsought I spurned :
I valued nothing that I did not seek,
And never found the thing that I had sought.
The soul can ask what it can never solve ;
And I vexed mine with problems out of reach—
The Source of Being and Eternity,
Man, God, the Universe, the Infinite,
The soul of Good and Evil, and their Laws,
And the relations of the One to All,
And of the All to One, and the deep cause
From which this net-work of relations sprang,
And all the mighty web of influence
Which God is ever weaving round the world,
Where suns make out the pattern, and where stars
Flame out in bright relief. These were my themes.
And, like an idiot weeping for the moon,
I went off wailing that I wanted more,
Immeasurably more than I could have.
The bird was dumb, because it could not drown
The rattling thunder with its evening song ;

And the bright butterfly refused to spread
The velvet splendour of its plumes, because
It could not put the sun out with its wings.
And when at length I roused me from my dream,
And walked out in the woods for solacement,
The very winds laughed at me ; and the flowers
Smiled up a keen rebuke, for they had grown
Beneath the hand of God, and spurn'd it not ;
Had filled the measure of their being up
And asked not Wherfore they should shoot and bud :
And everything within the landscape seem'd
A glittering reproach ; for they all lived
As they were pre-ordained, and questioned not—
Breathing expositors of their God's will.
They had not crossed His purposes like me.
They had not quarrelled with themselves, and with
Their Maker, and the universe, because
It was too vast to play at hide and seek,
And would not yield its secret up to them.
And I crept through them, like a guilty spy,
Who had done nothing in the world but peep,
And had seen nothing to reward the act.
The very grass I trod beneath my feet
Seem'd conscious of my presence ; and the woods,
With all their thousand voices seem'd to mock
And to contemn my vain, o'er-bloated pride,
Asking me, ‘ Hast thou quite exhausted truth,
And scanned the secrets of the infinite,

And scooped the immeasurable waters out,
Laying their beds bare with thy cockle-shell ?
And are the purposes of God exposed,
Hence and for evermore to curious eyes ;
And all the mysteries of the world explained ;
And life become the merest daily drudge
Stripp'd of its dark-sublime relationships ?
Hast thou found out the secret walks of God,
And trodden down the plants of His own rearing,
And flung the gate wide open, so that all
May see Him busy at His endless task,
Creating, guarding, and ordaining all ?
Until I fled from Nature as from Doom,
And plung'd into the vortex of the towns,
Hoping to drown the voice of self-reproach
Amid the jar of battling interests ;
And drawn a veil of smoke between myself
And the all-conscious glance of star-eyed heaven :
Saying unto my soul—‘ Here I shall find
Shams like myself—men who have thrown away
Huge fragments of their life in vain pursuits,
And found themselves the poorer for their toil,
And flung the dice of life up in disgust.’
But no ! I found all eagerly at work,
And though my motives had been high as heaven,
And theirs were sordid as a miser's hoards,
Yet they had bravely won while I had lost.
They had gone down into the field of Time,

And come off conquerors, while I was foiled.
They had been workers, and the universe
Was grateful to them as it is for stars.

Philosophy ! Philosophy ! Deep fool !
Thou most profound of all inanities !
Great bankrupt ! Soul-deluding fiend ! Ah why
Hast thou thus robb'd me of my early years,
Fringing the pathway of despair with flowers,
Strewing thy hollow reeds across the gulph,
Robing Corruption in a cloth of gold,
And painting the pale cheeks of pain with bloom ?
Why didst thou conjure up thy phantom forms,
Thy false, and fair appearances of truth,
Thy bright enchanted scenes of loveliness,
Wrapping me in an atmosphere of light,
But to delude me with thy hollow vaunts ;
And then, when I had come to worship thee,
Veil thyself o'er in shadows, and depart,
Leaving me on a narrow neck of land—
The black and roaring waters at my feet,
And the eternal thunders o'er my head ;—
The puppet of the monetary stars,
The butt of nature, and the fool of time,
That sapient idiot—a philosopher !

Thus has it ever been with all who thought,—
With those who strove to battle with the soul,

And wring from it the secret talisman
That should unfold to view the under-world
Of causes, and occult relationships ;
And show things as they are within themselves,
And not as they appear to vulgar eyes.
All earnest spirits have gone down to death
With a terrific curse upon their lips,
An imprecation on thy broken vows,
Thou mist-brow'd Sophist ! thou expiring lie !
Thine humbler sister, Science, hath advanced,
While thou hast dwindled with the march of moons.
The socket is approach'd, and thou art doom'd
To flicker thy pale light a moment more
Dimly enough ! and then die out in smoke !
Hast thou not cheated all, from Thales, and
Anaximander, Anaximenes,
And (legend-clouded name) Pythagoras,
Down to the latest speculator's dream,
In that great land of dreamers—Germany ?
Is not thy mighty roll of names a cheat—
A miserable record of the pranks
A certain pale flame play'd upon a marsh,
Where all the mighty of the earth were swamp'd ?
Are not the great names of thy progeny
Mournful as dates upon a coffin lid ?
Most mighty ships, but stranded into wrecks ;
Bright hopes, but dissipated like the mists ;
Sweet dreams, but gone like last year's midnight tolls,

Pass'd off into the breath of bygone winds ;
Thy Plato, Zeno, and thy Socrates,
Thy sceptics, cynics, sophists, and the hosts
Of sects that parcell'd out the ancient world,
What were they but gigantic arms outstretch'd
To clasp a melting cloud—a puff of air ?
Those lofty ones that panted for the truth,
And question'd all things, waiting in a hush
For those responses which were never heard,
Gazing with earnest eyes towards thy fanes
For aboriginal and primal facts,
And all the raw materials out of which
The texture of the universe was spun ;
Not satisfied with picking up loose pearls,
Which Science threadeth on her lengthening string ;
But plunging into the remorseless sea,
And groping in her halls for hoards at once,
Asking of all her echoless profound,
How they were fashion'd forth, and whence they came.
Alas ! they found the soul broad as a Sun
In questionings ; but puny in result.
High spiring pinnacles glance up at heaven,
With narrow dormitories fit for dolls,
A palace guesteth nothing but a mouse,
And one poor minnow wags his tail alone,
In a wide-spreading lake, that might reveal
The huge proportions of the rounded hills,
And bosom night herself with all her stars !

They found that we are so enwrapp'd in self,
That the whole world is but its duplicate ;
That the soul seeth nothing but the soul,
And that things are to it but what they seem ;
That we know nothing of the outer world
But what the inner world enstamps
With her own seal, and moulds unto herself ;
That the eye seeth just what fits the eye ;
That the mind knoweth just what fits the mind ;
That the soul flings her image on the rim
And outer edge of all things, and looks out
Through her sense-windows on herself—no more !
The world is what she makes it to herself,
Something, or nothing, as the whim may be ;
That certitude is unattainable,
And *self* is the beginning and the end,
The Alpha, and Omega, and the *all*.
The right hand clasps the left—and all is done ;
And outer things are shadows but of this !

No sight so sad on all the sands of time
As the deep footprints of these mighty ones,
All tending to one point, through varying paths,
Led on by thee, most false Philosophy,
Huge-promising, and non-performing fiend !
For they all wander'd in their lofty quest
Till their foot dangled over the abyss,
And the upheaving gulph was full in view,

While that they had pursued went floating o'er,
Like Summer vapour, to the other side,
And the eternal stars look'd calmly on,
Inviting them to cross the roaring deep
And eat the fruits of knowledge in their midst,
For they had come up face to face with death,
And saw that only he possess'd the keys
Of highest knowledge, of truth absolute ;
That he could loose the trammels of the soul—
He only—that to him alone was given
The power to break the mud-crust of their cell,
And let them soar and sing for evermore !
They saw this and acknowledged it. And he
Smiled on them, calling them his “dearest friends,”
And laid his white hand on their bending heads,
Giving them all his blessing. Wherefore they,
And all who follow them, return again
Unto the laughing upper-world, pale-brow'd,
And circled in a misty atmosphere,
With deep eyes looking into distant night—
Children of death, and bearing on their face
The impress of his pale, transparent hand !

They found that we are so enwrapp'd in self,
That the whole world is but its duplicate ;
That the soul seeth nothing but the soul,
And that things are to it but what they seem ;
That we know nothing of the outer world
But what the inner world enstamps
With her own seal, and moulds unto herself ;
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For they all wander'd in their lofty quest
Till their foot dangled over the abyss,
And the upheaving gulph was full in view,

While that they had pursued went floating o'er,
Like Summer vapour, to the other side,
And the eternal stars look'd calmly on,
Inviting them to cross the roaring deep
And eat the fruits of knowledge in their midst,
For they had come up face to face with death,
And saw that only he possess'd the keys
Of highest knowledge, of truth absolute ;
That he could loose the trammels of the soul—
He only—that to him alone was given
The power to break the mud-crust of their cell,
And let them soar and sing for evermore !
They saw this and acknowledged it. And he
Smiled on them, calling them his “ dearest friends,”
And laid his white hand on their bending heads,
Giving them all his blessing. Wherefore they,
And all who follow them, return again
Unto the laughing upper-world, pale-brow'd,
And circled in a misty atmosphere,
With deep eyes looking into distant night—
Children of death, and bearing on their face
The impress of his pale, transparent hand !

Or devils fingering marbles ! Ever thus !
Great lights play round them from their unseen crowns ;
Great destinies hang over them like clouds ;
And they go scrambling on for halfpence still ;
All arms and legs, and scampering eagerness,
And puny, impotent relinquishments ;
While round-faced suns break into merriment,
Saying unto each other, “ Oh, what fools ! ”

Thus they stream on ! All mantled round by time,
Like god-lings buried to the neck in leaves,
With brows the sun might bless himself to see,
And eyes in which the stars might lose themselves ;
Kings, with a beggar’s wallet at their back ;
Princes and potentates, disporting rags ;
Crown’d monarchs, begging at their palace-gate,
And taking crumbs from menials, with a bow !

Thus they stream on ! All gasping out for wealth ;
For the poor pittance of a niggard world,
While vacant empires cry aloud for lords,
And sceptres are piled up in heaven, star-high,
Waiting for faithful hands to grasp, and wield.

Thus they stream on ! On through the darken’d world ;
Reeling, mad-drunk ; and fill’d with harlotries,
With the great Sisters hanging on each arm,—
Eternity, and the starr’d Infinite,—

Saying unto them, " Brothers, dwell with us."
On through the darken'd world. Their country house,
Now grown too mighty for their tenancy,
In whose apartments they are lost; and gaze
With eyes of wonder on their stores of wealth—
Strangers unto their own.

Ah! it is sad,
That of all things man only should be poor.
The world is rich in gladness and in smiles ;
While he—sad fool—goes mourning all his days.
Daily the sun flings out his laughing light ;
And all the clouds catch up the jocund hues,
And dance along the sympathetic heavens,
Like cheeks puff'd out with laughter. And at night,
The moon smiles on the stars ; and they on her ;
And all the streams on both. Old hoary woods,
And brooks for ever young ; and birds, and bees,
And winds, and all the ceaseless hum of time
Give out sweet gratulations unto all—
Outwellings of a joyance overbrimm'd—
Heart-flutters in a boundless hymn of praise.
While MAN? Ha! Ha! Well what of *him*? Aye what?
Can he not laugh? Yes! till the houses ring.
An angel lost a lofty throne in heaven,
And came down doubling peal on gusty peal,
Saying that all were mad who dwelt up there!
Cometh the laughter fresh up from the heart,
Or is it but the idiotic smile

Set on a maniac's features, but to say
The soul is not at liberty just now ?
Can *he* laugh ? He—great bankrupt of all time,—
Sole dissonance in world-wide choristries :
He who had all, and lost it on a throw ;
He to whom day was given as a guide,
And night as friend and teacher,—he who smote
Joy in the face, and would have none of her,—
Great pupil of all times. What does he now ?
Sits burly in the sunshine, paring sticks,
And then looks up and laughs !

Ha ! Dreaming still ?

And am I doom'd to dream for ever thus ;
To fold my arms, and let the world go by
Like a great holiday pageant in the sun,
Till Time begins to stroke me with his wand,
Into a mass of bent decrepitude ?

Has this great clattering workshop nought for me
But the prerogative of looking on ?
Was I sent out of old eternities
But to cry “foul play !” to the universe,
And then go puling off into the shades
With a lie rotting on my wither'd lips ?
What right have I to mark the earnest brow,
And earth-bent eye of fellow men, and say
“ Ye are expending energies for nought,
Tossing your arms in vortexes of winds,

And fronting walls of water?" Are they not
Working for time, and all times with their might,
With heart and soul, and eye, and hand, and brain?
What, though their destinies to them are skies
To those who moil on underground with lamps,
And all high hopes are unseen stars in heaven,
Yet are they working upward towards the sun,
And carving with their hands a fane for God!
Their acts are one with Nature's—one with His.
Their souls, pent-up volcanoes, till they burst,
Gather in elemental fire, and then
Fling out huge legacies of solid rock,
To crumble into soil for future flowers.
What though *self* underlies their deed,
Like mud the silver surface of a lake,
When heaven itself shines on it day and night,
And sun and moon pass over it in turns,
And a whole sky of stars looks on its deeps
A whole night long in breathless ecstasy,
And then, when daylight comes, goes off to God
To say what mirrors earth holds in her halls?
What, though the tree be rooted in foul slime,
If its great upper branches swing in heaven,
With rainbows for young blossoms, and with suns
For ripen'd fruit?

[A long pause, during which he walks to and fro in a troubled manner.]

Is there no help for this?
And am I doom'd to hear the hinges grate,

Stirr'd by the ghostly hand of mighty winds,
While the door opens not, but grinds, and grinds,
As if to tell me I am prisoner here,
Beyond the reach of hope, or solacement ?
Soul ! Soul ! Fling thyself out of this ! Dash through
The window-panes, out, out into the light,—
Into the breathing world of shapes and deeds,
And leave thy cell self-dungeon'd here behind !
Out, out at once, and look not back again,
Lest thou, like Lot's wife, art transform'd to stone,
And stand upon the waste-world of the plain,
Like a lank finger pointing at the moon !
Flee from the doomèd city—from the homes
Of pale idolatries, and self-sick night ;
Flee from thyself, and from the poison'd air
Of o'erwrought thought into the world of deeds !
Strike up the arm that smites thee on the mouth,
And flings thee panting on the jagged rocks !
Off with thy thinkings, and go out to work—
Out to the solid world.

[*Another pause.*

And what means this ?

Am I to leave my soul behind, and go
Stripp'd for the task, a bundle of strong bones,
Of rounded muscles, and of well-strung nerves ?
Wherefore call ye this thing that toils thus—Man ?
Is it in bitter mockery, or sport ?
This grave spade-wielder, this food-grinding churl,
Whose mechanism morning sets to work,

And evening finds stretch'd in a snoring sleep ?
Is this to live ? And were we sent from heaven,
Like Winter snow-flakes through the fields of air,
But to alight on dung-hills, and expire ?
Shall I join Donkeydom, and learn to bray
At all things greater, nobler than myself,
And be a beast of burden,—not a soul
Endow'd with eyes and hands ? [*Another pause.*

Nay ! Nay ! What then ?

Live as I have lived, scooping water up,
To see it trickle through my fingers, thus :—

[*Pours water into his hand.*

And be a shrivell'd weed to cling around
A cog of the great world's revolving wheel ?

Or is it possible to wed great thought
To noble action, and to make them one ?
And if it were, what purpose would it serve
To a mad world that clings unto the past,
Like a young starveling to his mother's rags,
And is drawn forward unto nobler aims
As willingly as Hector was, behind
The chariot wheels of his great Grecian foe ?
Wed thought to action ? Make them one ? Ha ! Ha !
Cork thunder in a bottle ; and go round
With phials labell'd LIGHTNING in your hand !

SCENE IX.—*A Banquet Room. Night.*

CHARLES, HENRY, EDWARD, AMELIA, MARY, &c.

Henry. Night has come down upon us like a guest :
The stars are trembling in the cope of heaven ;
And the light winds sing their low lullabies
Unto the sleeping flowers. The moon has come
Climbing the tree-tops to look in on us,
And the wine sparkles goldenly at her.
Our talk has been a wealthy summer-time
Aflush with flowers, and mellow-tasting fruits.
But now a chilling silence hath crept in,
Like Winter to a garden ! Drive it hence !
Ruffle the plumage of this bird of night
With a great gust of song !

All. *A song ! A song !*
Let music fill up all the gaps of life.
Edward begin.

EDWARD.

A bank of flowers ! A bank of flowers !
And sunshine steeping the Summer hours ;
Sunshine gambolling up with the clouds,
Shining on river, and cottage, and hall ;
Sunshine laughing in wrinkled old lanes,
And wagging the beard of the waterfall ;

Sunshine dancing along the sea ;
Sunshine filling the cup of the air ;
Sunshine glinting along the leaves—
Sunshine, sunshine—everywhere !

And a maiden sits on the bank of flowers,
Looses her tresses, and clasps her white hands,
Thrills at the glory that fills the blue sky,
Smiles at the smile of the shining lands.
Her cheek is just wetted with tears of bliss,
There is sunshine without, and sunshine within ;—
Ah ! who could think in a scene like this
That the world had been blotted and marr'd by sin ?
Her eyelashes tremble, her ruddy lips move,—
What beauty, what bliss to the summer are given !
Ah ! which is the fairest—this sun-gilded globe—
Or the pink-clouded porch of yon golden-brow'd heaven ?
The maiden sits, and clasps her white hands,
(With very joy her heart is brimming.)
And the light in the soft, deep blue of her eye
Like a star in a sea of bliss is swimming.
But a snake glides out of a clump of flowers,
And his gold and purples might match the skies ;—
Oh ! the glory that gleams o'er the sleek-mail'd sides,
Oh ! the mocking light of his wierd-like eyes !

A wreath of snow ! A wreath of snow !
Darkness above, and night below !

Snow on the mountains, and snow on the vales ;
Snow upon moorland, and cottage, and hall,—
Frost over all, choking up the old lanes,
And stiffening the beard of the waterfall.

Snow marking the marge of the sullen sea ;
Snow piercing the gloom of the midnight air ;
Snow lining the ribs of the moaning trees.

Above and below
Nothing but snow,
And winter and darkness—everywhere !

And the maiden sits on a wreath of snow,
Looses her tresses, and clasps her thin hands,
Trembles to look on the great black sky,
Shivers to see the ghostly lands.

Her cheek is just wetted with tears of woe ;
There is terror without and darkness within,—
Oh ! who could think, in a scene like this,
That the world had known anything else but sin ?

Her eyelashes tremble, her pallid lips move,—
What fear, and what terror to winter are given !
Oh ! which is the darkest—this sun-orphan'd globe—
Or the black-clouded porch of yon angry-brow'd

heaven ?
The maiden sits and clasps her thin hands,
(With very woe her heart is brimming,)
And the light in the anguish'd blue of her eye,
Like a corpse in a troubled sea is swimming.

But no snake glides out of the wreath of snow,
With its gold and purples to match the skies ;
For ah ! it has done its hateful task,
With the mocking light of those wierd-like eyes !

Charles. Sorrow and sin—an old tale, friend of mine.
Methinks a song clear as a silver lake
With one star on it would befit this night.

Henry. Aye night has been good to us. Let her go
Hung round with songs as morn will be with flowers.
Come butterflies of poesy, arise ;
Spread out your light-involved wings, and soar,
And let the night trail into golden day,
With her skirts stiffen'd with soul-jewelry !

Amelia. Edward has struck the key. Come, Henry, sing ;
And I will wander through the harp's sweet strings,
Like the low wind in May among the flowers,
Or like the murmur of the starlit sea,
To the soft warble of the nightingale.

Henry. Ah, thus invited, who could e'er resist ?

Thou pleadest, love, and all things plead ;
For what is life but endless needing ?
All worlds have wants beyond themselves,
And live by ceaseless pleading.

The earth yearns towards the sun for light,
The stars all tremble towards each other ;

And every moon that shines to-night
Hangs trembling on an elder brother.

Flowers plead for grace to live ; and bees
Plead for the tinted domes of flowers ;
Streams rush into the big-soul'd seas ;
The seas yearn for the golden hours.

The moon pleads for her preacher, Night ;
Old ocean pleadeth for the moon ;
Noon flies into the shades for rest ;
The shades seek out the noon.

Life is an everlasting seeking,
Souls seek, and pant, and plead for truth.
Youth hangeth on the skirts of age,
Age yearneth still towards youth.

And thus all cling unto each other ;
For nought from all things else is riven.
Heaven bendeth o'er the prostrate earth,
Earth spreads her arms towards heaven.

So, do thou bend above me, love,
And I will bless thee from afar ;
Thou shalt be heaven, and I the sea
That bosometh the star.

Charles. Cold, Henry, cold, and philosophical.
Thou art a very Newton in thy love.
Come light thy pipe, and take thy lady's hand,
And use it for a stopper—as he did !
Spinoza laugh'd to see the spiders fight.
Sages do silly things sometimes I think,—
Nought half so foolish as to fall in love !
To think of bringing dust from ancient tomes,
To lay it on a lady's spotless glove,
And hope that she will love you for its sake !
Lore must be fresh to win a lady's heart,
Fresh as she is, and sparkling like the dew.
There is new wisdom in a lovely face
That shames the old for ever,—drives it back
Into the Titan-world of dim old shapes.
Love liveth in to-day, and in to-morrow,
And yesterday is nothing to the heart.
Hegel and Fichté in a lady's bower
Are blocks of marble to a gay parterre.
Love smileth on the bright and blooming flowers,
And leaveth truth to fester with their roots.
It looks not to the wherefore, but shines on,
Like yonder moon, in spite of all the creeds.
To me the universe is one great heart ;
And love the only passion of the spheres.
The winds but whisper one soul-stirring word ;
The trees all bend their stately heads to this ;
Old Ocean heaves it from his panting breast ;

The flowers all breathe it in their restless sleep ;
And the great tongue of Night that sounds in "stars"
Singeth this one word only.—It is LOVE !

Edward. Come, grumbler, sing thyself, a song in which
Love shall come leaping from thy throbbing lines
Like the young soul of music from a harp !

CHARLES.

Thy hand ! Thy hand ! Thy lily hand,
It flushes all my brow.
Thy voice ! Thy voice ! Thy silver voice,
It thrills my spirit now.
A joy hath grown up in my heart,
It fans my life to bliss ;
It is the infant of thy lips—
The baby of thy kiss !
And it hath ruffled o'er my soul,
And drawn forth all its powers,
Like July-winds upon the lips
Of golden-hearted flowers.

Bend o'er me with those starry eyes,
Those eyelids milky white ;
Sink on my storm-impassion'd breast,
Like a peace-giving night :
Bend o'er me with thy sky-like brow,
Which all the stars might seek :—
Bend o'er me ;—let thy golden hair
Trail on my burning cheek.

My heart leaps towards thee, as the sea
Pants at the maiden moon ;
A swimming haze comes o'er my soul,
Like a great sultry noon :
And all my life is lined with music-bars,
Pack'd with sweet notes that tremble like the stars !

Mary. Now I will sing a song of Winter-time.
Poor Edith gave it me before she died.
Alexis wrote it for her, I was told.

I stand beside thy lonely grave, my love.
The wet lands stretch below me like a bog ;
Darkness comes showering down upon me fast ;
The wind is whining like a houseless dog ;—
The cold, cold wind is whining round thy grave,
It comes up wet, and dripping from the fen ;
The tawny twilight creeps into the dark,
Like a dun, angry lion to his den.

There is a forlorn moaning in the air—
A sobbing round the spot where thou art sleeping ;
There is a dull glare in the wintry sky,
As though the eye of heaven were red with weeping.
Sharp gusts of tears come raining from the clouds,
The ancient church looks desolate and wild ;
There is a deep, cold shiver in the earth,
As though the great world hunger'd for her child.

The very trees fling their gaunt arms on high,
Calling for Summer to come back again ;
Earth cries that Heaven has quite deserted her,
Heaven answers but in showers of drizzling rain.
The rain comes plashing on my pallid face ;
Night, like a witch, is squatting on the ground ;
The storm is rising, and its howling wail
Goes baying round her, like a hungry hound.

The clouds, like grim, black faces, come and go.
One tall tree stretches up against the sky ;
It lets the rain through, like a trembling hand
Pressing thin fingers on a watery eye.
The moon came, but shrank back, like a young girl
Who has burst in upon funereal sadness ;
One star came—Cleopatra-like, the Night
Swallow'd this one pearl in a fit of madness.
And here I stand, the weltering heaven above,
Beside thy lonely grave, my lost, my buried love !

Henry. Ah ! like Alexis—pack'd with crowded thought ;
Dark, and yet radiant, like an eagle's plumes,
Scarr'd by the lightnings it was playing with.
I saw him with a letter in his hand :
He said it came from Edith—she was dead.
Mary. I sat with her that April night she died.
The moon was up, and all the stars were out.
The new year swath'd in moonbeams, like a babe

Play'd with the early flowers ; then wept soft tears.
There was a ruffling as of wings outside—
Of holy angels' wings. Earth seem'd near heaven.
A wind was rambling up among the clouds,
A wreath of glory lay athwart the East,
Like a great prophet's robe, and spoke of morn,—
Of morn and of the stars,—of earth and heaven.
Streamers kept coming through the gate of night,
Couriers of mercy from star-palaces.
The world seem'd lifted in the arms of prayer
All sobbing, to the lap of mother heaven,
Like a dear tearful child that has made peace.
It was a holy night. She told me all.
“ A packet for Alexis, when I 'm dead.”
And then the fair one spoke to me of God,
And of his angels,—of the thrones and crowns,
And of the bliss supernal of the skies.
She seem'd more like an angel come from heaven
Than a poor spirit who was travelling there.
There was a gentle wisdom in her speech,
A wisdom soft as feather-footed sleep.
There was a great white spirit in the skies,—
So the sweet prattler said,—who, night by night,
Smiled on her from behind the little moon ;
And thrust his mighty hand below the stars,
To lift her to her sapphire seat in heaven.
He drew dream-curtains back, and she could see
Great crowds of happy faces smiling through,

Stretching white arms to welcome her above.
And then there came a pause—a long, long pause.
Methought the night stood still, starr'd as she was,
And hush'd the winds, as a Queen Mother might
The noisy babble of her happy babes,
To let a sad procession pass in peace ;—
And I grew dizzy.

From the bed arose
A sweet, wild sound, like that the zephyrs make
When they come crowding on the wind-harp's strings.
Then all was silent. And her eyes were fix'd,
Trembling no more like starlight in the dew.
One arm was laid upon the coverlet:
One thin, white arm, like a pale streak of dawn.
They said that she was dead !

SCENE X.—*The Streets. Night.*

ALEXIS.

Oh this eternal roar—this froth and hum ;
This troubled tossing in a turbid rush !
Art thou not weary, heaven, to look on it ?
Its black, hot, bubbles dash themselves towards thee,
And burst in grimdest night at the attempt.
And ye calm stars—ye stars for ever calm,
Are ye not hoary grown with listening
To these terrestrial groans and thunderings ?

Wherefore this flush of life? Rest! Rest, O Earth;
Dance thou no longer in the fields of air;
Bid thy great heart be still! Oh be at peace,
And let thy sons rest with thee, weary one!
Why prolong life till madness supervenes?
Why go careering from the arms of God,
Into the jaws of everlasting night?
Each dash of the great crested waves of life
Carries thee farther from the haven of hope.
Pause where thou art. Thou canst not travel back;
Thou hast been rolling down the steeps of time,
Out, out into the wilderness, far, far
From righteousness and the eternal light.
Rest where thou art! Oh rest, and cease to be,
Since being is a madness and a curse!
Art thou not weary, Time, of thy long tramp,
Thy long downgoings from the thrones of bliss?
Are we not far enough from God and truth,
That thou must still escort us through the glooms,
Into the realms of everlasting dark?

Hail death! All hail! Sole monarch of the world!
Lay thy cold hand upon the pulse of life,
And bid its feverish throbbings beat no more.
Sole good—preventative of future crimes,—
Dash the great sand-glass from thy brother Time,
For angels have grown sick of watching it:
Snap all the trembling strings of this great harp,

That heaven no longer hear its dissonance :
Bring thy skull-goblet out, and let it reek
Brimm'd over with a deep, Lethean draught,
For the tired world's parch'd lips, and heavy heart :
Or stretch thy slumberous wand athwart all eyes,
And aching heads, and souls in agony ;
And let oppressed and the oppressor sleep,
The tyrant and the slave, for both alike
Are weary and life-sick.

For man no more

Works with God, or for God, as once he did.
God builds, and man pulls down. Man builds, and God
Bares His almighty arm, and with the dust
Buries the daring fanes which man has built.
God and His creature are no more at one.
They are at issue ; and have different aims ;
And work for different ends :—therefore this cry
Of inward agony in the soul of man,—
This writhing underneath the heavy lash,—
This burning thirst for something none hath touch'd,
But which all say the Infinite holds out ;
And the sweet peace, and royal blessing, which
The King of kings enstamp'd upon His works
Have gone ;—and there is now a crownéd curse,—
A full-robed Monarch of the nether hell,
Sitting black-brow'd upon the souls of men,
And holding them in irons !

Oh ! the groans

Which the pent city sends up from its heart ;
The untold agonies ; the bitter tears ;
The wrongs inflicted, and the tortures borne !
Look on the face of nature ;—on the vales,
And on the proud-peak'd hills ;—man's monitor
And man have quarrell'd. And the pupil dares
What the great master dared not—to work wrongs !

Lo the wide gulph 'twixt man and nature now.
God said, "Let Nature stand betwixt Myself
And erring Man. And let her be the type, ✓
And representative of good in forms
And laws. Let her be spirit indurate,
And hold out to the soul of him I love,
A portrait and a likeness of his God ;
That thus he may behold the good, and love it ;
And come at length to imitate in works
That which his soul acknowledges ; and take
A faithful impress to his inmost heart
Of all the true and noble." But alas !
Although the book is here, man reads it not ;
Although the prophet speaketh, none will hear ;
And nature has become a mute to man.
From the huge city rise up sighs and groans,
Curses and blasphemies, and hideous words,
That make hell tremble towards the lips of man ;
While from the world of nature songs ascend,
And all her fields are redolent of love.

A sweet contentment breathes out from the streams,
And from the carolling woods, and wealthy vales ;—
While from the happiest heart in this vast throng
Goes up a cry towards heaven,—a wail none hear ;
And every sickly smile is but a veil
To mantle o'er contorted agonies,
And paint the features of a hideous want ;
Or stifle the harsh cries and dissonance
Of the poor howling wretch that is within.

And still the world goes on. Night after night
She hushes up the clamours in her heart,
And journeys onward through the unsinning heavens,
Skirting creation with a ring of gloom.
And stars turn paler as she passes by,
Bearing the million curses on her breast
Which man—that giant incubus—hath wrought ;
And through the night, a whispering shudder runs,
And a long tremble is the only track
She leaves behind her as she ploughs the sky,
By which the innocent stars know she has pass'd,
And that they may resume their broken songs :
And, over the dark vortex of her path,
Smile their pale thanks to heaven for purity.

And still the world goes on. Morn after morn
Decking herself in her primeval bloom ;
For she hath gone to the confessional,

And pour'd her heart out to the listening Night,
And the Dark Priest hath shriven her. Wherefore she
Rises refresh'd and radiant as at first,
Ere the low jar of one slight wrong had come
And flutter'd, light as rose-leaf, to her heart :—
Rises a priestess once again to God,
Prepared to listen patiently all day
To the recital of a tale of woes,
Old as the fall of man ; and then go off—
Involuntary sinner as she is—
Heart-sick and weary, to her old friend Night ;
Saying unto herself, “ There is a God,
Or every morn were a new miracle ! ”
There is a God ! Ay, or the universe
Had thunder'd its anathemas to man,
For its laws broken, and its lessons scorn'd ;
And all the spheres that tremble at the glance
Of men—the wallowing demigods of earth—
Had cried aloud for vengeance ; clapp'd their hands
To see the end of such enormities !
There is a God ! Ay, or the ancient world,
O'erburthen'd with such overwhelming crimes,
Had whirl'd off madly into outer space,
To hide her shame in ever-deepening glooms ;
Or her great heart had come in twain, and Night
Had shown a skeleton world unto the stars.

There is a God ! And therefore evil deeds

The flowers all breathe it in their restless sleep ;
And the great tongue of Night that sounds in "stars"
Singeth this one word only.—It is LOVE !

Edward. Come, grumbler, sing thyself, a song in which
Love shall come leaping from thy throbbing lines
Like the young soul of music from a harp !

CHARLES.

Thy hand ! Thy hand ! Thy lily hand,
It flushes all my brow.
Thy voice ! Thy voice ! Thy silver voice,
It thrills my spirit now.
A joy hath grown up in my heart,
It fans my life to bliss ;
It is the infant of thy lips—
The baby of thy kiss !
And it hath ruffled o'er my soul,
And drawn forth all its powers,
Like July-winds upon the lips
Of golden-hearted flowers.

Bend o'er me with those starry eyes,
Those eyelids milky white ;
Sink on my storm-impassion'd breast,
Like a peace-giving night :
Bend o'er me with thy sky-like brow,
Which all the stars might seek :—
Bend o'er me ;—let thy golden hair
Trail on my burning cheek.

My heart leaps towards thee, as the sea
Pants at the maiden moon ;
A swimming haze comes o'er my soul,
Like a great sultry noon :
And all my life is lined with music-bars,
Pack'd with sweet notes that tremble like the stars !

Mary. Now I will sing a song of Winter-time.
Poor Edith gave it me before she died.
Alexis wrote it for her, I was told.

I stand beside thy lonely grave, my love.
The wet lands stretch below me like a bog ;
Darkness comes showering down upon me fast ;
The wind is whining like a houseless dog ;—
The cold, cold wind is whining round thy grave,
It comes up wet, and dripping from the fen ;
The tawny twilight creeps into the dark,
Like a dun, angry lion to his den.

There is a forlorn moaning in the air—
A sobbing round the spot where thou art sleeping ;
There is a dull glare in the wintry sky,
As though the eye of heaven were red with weeping.
Sharp gusts of tears come raining from the clouds,
The ancient church looks desolate and wild ;
There is a deep, cold shiver in the earth,
As though the great world hunger'd for her child.

The very trees fling their gaunt arms on high,
Calling for Summer to come back again ;
Earth cries that Heaven has quite deserted her,
Heaven answers but in showers of drizzling rain.
The rain comes plashing on my pallid face ;
Night, like a witch, is squatting on the ground ;
The storm is rising, and its howling wail
Goes baying round her, like a hungry hound.

The clouds, like grim, black faces, come and go.
One tall tree stretches up against the sky ;
It lets the rain through, like a trembling hand
Pressing thin fingers on a watery eye.
The moon came, but shrank back, like a young girl
Who has burst in upon funereal sadness ;
One star came—Cleopatra-like, the Night
Swallow'd this one pearl in a fit of madness.
And here I stand, the weltering heaven above,
Beside thy lonely grave, my lost, my buried love !

Henry. Ah ! like Alexis—pack'd with crowded thought ;
Dark, and yet radiant, like an eagle's plumes,
Scarr'd by the lightnings it was playing with.
I saw him with a letter in his hand :
He said it came from Edith—she was dead.
Mary. I sat with her that April night she died.
The moon was up, and all the stars were out.
The new year swath'd in moonbeams, like a babe

Play'd with the early flowers ; then wept soft tears.
There was a ruffling as of wings outside—
Of holy angels' wings. Earth seem'd near heaven.
A wind was rambling up among the clouds,
A wreath of glory lay athwart the East,
Like a great prophet's robe, and spoke of morn,—
Of morn and of the stars,—of earth and heaven.
Streamers kept coming through the gate of night,
Couriers of mercy from star-palaces.
The world seem'd lifted in the arms of prayer
All sobbing, to the lap of mother heaven,
Like a dear tearful child that has made peace.
It was a holy night. She told me all.
“ A packet for Alexis, when I 'm dead.”
And then the fair one spoke to me of God,
And of his angels,—of the thrones and crowns,
And of the bliss supernal of the skies.
She seem'd more like an angel come from heaven
Than a poor spirit who was travelling there.
There was a gentle wisdom in her speech,
A wisdom soft as feather-footed sleep.
There was a great white spirit in the skies,—
So the sweet prattler said,—who, night by night,
Smiled on her from behind the little moon ;
And thrust his mighty hand below the stars,
To lift her to her sapphire seat in heaven.
He drew dream-curtains back, and she could see
Great crowds of happy faces smiling through,

Stretching white arms to welcome her above.
And then there came a pause—a long, long pause.
Methought the night stood still, starr'd as she was,
And hush'd the winds, as a Queen Mother might
The noisy babble of her happy babes,
To let a sad procession pass in peace ;—
And I grew dizzy.

From the bed arose
A sweet, wild sound, like that the zephyrs make
When they come crowding on the wind-harp's strings.
Then all was silent. And her eyes were fix'd,
Trembling no more like starlight in the dew.
One arm was laid upon the coverlet :
One thin, white arm, like a pale streak of dawn.
They said that she was dead !

SCENE X.—*The Streets. Night.*

ALEXIS.

Oh this eternal roar—this froth and hum ;
This troubled tossing in a turbid rush !
Art thou not weary, heaven, to look on it ?
Its black, hot, bubbles dash themselves towards thee,
And burst in grimmest night at the attempt.
And ye calm stars—ye stars for ever calm,
Are ye not hoary grown with listening
To these terrestrial groans and thunderings ?

Wherefore this flush of life ? Rest ! Rest, O Earth ;
Dance thou no longer in the fields of air ;
Bid thy great heart be still ! Oh be at peace,
And let thy sons rest with thee, weary one !
Why prolong life till madness supervenes ?
Why go careering from the arms of God,
Into the jaws of everlasting night ?
Each dash of the great crested waves of life
Carries thee farther from the haven of hope.
Pause where thou art. Thou canst not travel back ;
Thou hast been rolling down the steeps of time,
Out, out into the wilderness, far, far
From righteousness and the eternal light.
Rest where thou art ! Oh rest, and cease to be,
Since being is a madness and a curse !
Art thou not weary, Time, of thy long tramp,
Thy long downgoings from the thrones of bliss ?
Are we not far enough from God and truth,
That thou must still escort us through the glooms,
Into the realms of everlasting dark ?

Hail death ! All hail ! Sole monarch of the world !
Lay thy cold hand upon the pulse of life,
And bid its feverish throbings beat no more.
Sole good—preventative of future crimes,—
Dash the great sand-glass from thy brother Time,
For angels have grown sick of watching it :
Snap all the trembling strings of this great harp,

That heaven no longer hear its dissonance :
Bring thy skull-goblet out, and let it reek
Brimm'd over with a deep, Lethean draught,
For the tired world's parch'd lips, and heavy heart :
Or stretch thy slumberous wand athwart all eyes,
And aching heads, and souls in agony ;
And let oppressed and the oppressor sleep,
The tyrant and the slave, for both alike
Are weary and life-sick.

For man no more

Works with God, or for God, as once he did.
God builds, and man pulls down. Man builds, and God
Bares His almighty arm, and with the dust
Buries the daring fanes which man has built.
God and His creature are no more at one,
They are at issue ; and have different aims ;
And work for different ends :—therefore this cry
Of inward agony in the soul of man,—
This writhing underneath the heavy lash,—
This burning thirst for something none hath touch'd,
But which all say the Infinite holds out ;
And the sweet peace, and royal blessing, which
The King of kings enstamp'd upon His works
Have gone ;—and there is now a crownéd curse,—
A full-robed Monarch of the nether hell,
Sitting black-brow'd upon the souls of men,
And holding them in irons !

Oh ! the groans

Which the pent city sends up from its heart ;
The untold agonies ; the bitter tears ;
The wrongs inflicted, and the tortures borne !
Look on the face of nature ;—on the vales,
And on the proud-peak'd hills ;—man's monitor
And man have quarrell'd. And the pupil dares
What the great master dared not—to work wrongs !

Lo the wide gulph 'twixt man and nature now.
God said, "Let Nature stand betwixt Myself
And erring Man. And let her be the type, ✓
And representative of good in forms
And laws. Let her be spirit indurate,
And hold out to the soul of him I love,
A portrait and a likeness of his God ;
That thus he may behold the good, and love it ;
And come at length to imitate in works
That which his soul acknowledges ; and take
A faithful impress to his inmost heart
Of all the true and noble." But alas !
Although the book is here, man reads it not ;
Although the prophet speaketh, none will hear ;
And nature has become a mute to man.
From the huge city rise up sighs and groans,
Curses and blasphemies, and hideous words,
That make hell tremble towards the lips of man ;
While from the world of nature songs ascend,
And all her fields are redolent of love.

A sweet contentment breathes out from the streams,
And from the carolling woods, and wealthy vales ;—
While from the happiest heart in this vast throng
Goes up a cry towards heaven,—a wail none hear ;
And every sickly smile is but a veil
To mantle o'er contorted agonies,
And paint the features of a hideous want ;
Or stifle the harsh cries and dissonance
Of the poor howling wretch that is within.

And still the world goes on. Night after night
She hushes up the clamours in her heart,
And journeys onward through the unsinning heavens,
Skirting creation with a ring of gloom.
And stars turn paler as she passes by,
Bearing the million curses on her breast
Which man—that giant incubus—hath wrought ;
And through the night, a whispering shudder runs,
And a long tremble is the only track
She leaves behind her as she ploughs the sky,
By which the innocent stars know she has pass'd,
And that they may resume their broken songs :
And, over the dark vortex of her path,
Smile their pale thanks to heaven for purity.

And still the world goes on. Morn after morn
Decking herself in her primeval bloom ;
For she hath gone to the confessional,

And pour'd her heart out to the listening Night,
And the Dark Priest hath shriven her. Wherefore she
Rises refresh'd and radiant as at first,
Ere the low jar of one slight wrong had come
And flutter'd, light as rose-leaf, to her heart :—
Rises a priestess once again to God,
Prepared to listen patiently all day
To the recital of a tale of woes,
Old as the fall of man ; and then go off—
Involuntary sinner as she is—
Heart-sick and weary, to her old friend Night ;
Saying unto herself, “ There is a God,
Or every morn were a new miracle ! ”
There is a God ! Ay, or the universe
Had thunder'd its anathemas to man,
For its laws broken, and its lessons scorn'd ;
And all the spheres that tremble at the glance
Of men—the wallowing demigods of earth—
Had cried aloud for vengeance ; clapp'd their hands
To see the end of such enormities !
There is a God ! Ay, or the ancient world,
O'erburthen'd with such overwhelming crimes,
Had whirl'd off madly into outer space,
To hide her shame in ever-deepening glooms ;
Or her great heart had come in twain, and Night
Had shown a skeleton world unto the stars.

There is a God ! And therefore evil deeds

Work not such lasting evil as they might,
But are arrested by the Infinite hand
Ere their fell purpose is develop'd out
And woven into sunbeams. Therefore wrongs
Are transient ; and the wickedness which strives
To mar the good in others, blasts itself ;
And blessings jostle curses out of sight.
Man's evil deeds slide from his evil heart
Into the hand of God ; Who straightway turns
The pale ghost of a black and buried crime
Into a living joy, to take its place
Amid the wide economy of things—
Turning a thunder-rifted front to him
Who call'd it into being evermore—
But wearing a bright smile to all beside.
The keen, hell-pointed spear that should have pierced
Into the future, with its poison'd edge,
God bendeth, till its glittering points transfix
The impious soul that would have hurl'd it forth.
Man works his will, and willeth what he works ;
God governs both ; and never gives the reins
Of his great chariot to another's hands ;—
Therefore the hissing serpent made to coil
Round unborn hearts, and ages yet unborn,
And spill its fetid venom on their souls,
Lives but to sting the hand that cherish'd it,
Ere it is snatch'd away for other aims,
And then comes back again unto the world

A knotted wreath of roses. Evil dies.
It carries death in all its bloated veins,
Till it is startled into good by Him
Who ruleth times and spaces with a nod.
Man claims the present : God the future claims.
Therefore the soul that in malignancy,
With deep malevolence and hellish rites,
Conjures, from unnamed regions of the night,
The grim form of a cavern-eyed despair
To point lank-handed at the coming times,
And mock the ages as they travel up
Over the edges of eternity,—
To be an everlasting blur and blight,—
A dark, perpetual sneer at all things good,—
And a still grinning curse on all things bright ;—
The man who spends his energies for this,
Shall find his purpose thwarted, though the world
In his own time goes shuddering past the shape—
The hideous symbol of an After-Doom—
And his own soul smiles only at its power ;
And the gaunt hand points at the future still,
When he is call'd upon to lay him down,
And fold him in the cerements of death ;
Still shall his aim be thwarted : for the hand
Of the great God shall swoop upon the arm
Till the grim finger points but at his grave ;
And the still standing curse he would have left
To curdle the young blood of after-times

Shall haunt him like a hideous memory—
At once his memoir and his epitaph !

Thus is it ever ; God repairs the wrongs
Which man is ever working in the world.
The dim old past and future dwell with Him
In earth or heaven, like rich purpureal blots
Blurr'd into beauty by a master's hand.
Whate'er man touches he obscures, like clouds
The unsuspecting gladness of the moon.
These are beyond his reach, and therefore fair.
Only the Present, with its wintry face,
Its keen, cold, jaggéd icicles is his ;
Therefore its dark repellancy and glooms.
The Present 'twixt the Past and Future stands
Like a black night between two sunny days :
While from the sweet Twin Sisters—the fair maids
Who wear supernal glories on their brows—
Come, through the sweltering drizzles of the night,
Deep gushes of sweet song ; low melodies,
And fragments of the talk of spirit-land—
Hints of unfathom'd meaning to the soul,
And to the heart July-like gorgeousness ;
While, from the night itself, the weltering night,
The poor sad Present, the black-clouded Now,
Reek out the sound of breaking waves, the moan
Of cold winds coming from the bleachéd North,
And the sharp whistling made by uptoss'd arms,

Gleaming a moment in the shuddering dark,
Ere they go down into the deeps for aye !
Man's life is dwindling into nullity,
Is shrinking up like a collapsed balloon,
Is sinking into puny helplessness,
Lopp'd of its grand aspirings, its bright hopes.
We have got eyes, and hands, and ears, and tongues,
And we must talk and listen, touch and taste.
We must take care of this. And above all
We must get money, though heaven thunders " No ! "
And where is the poor soul this weary while ?
" Oh, sweep the avenues," say we, " make them clean,
And let the lawn be shaven ; let the house
Show a great frontage to the gaping times,
And let it tower up with its battlements,
Courting the skies in self-complacency ;
Let the outside impose upon the sense,
Saying unto the world, ' the King's at home ; ' "
But as for the crown'd monarch, there within,
Why let him tend the fire, or pare his nails !
Let him and the old cobwebs quite alone.
Ensconced in that dark corner of the house
He is quite harmless, and may sit in state
With midnight dreams for Courtiers, and the hours
Of heavy sleep for Ushers of the Rod.

And yet great hearts are simmering in the world ;
And now and then, through the dun heaven of life,

Great thoughts come reeling from the feast of gods,
Like drunken stars, staggering among the clouds.—
Thoughts of great bards, that come upon our souls
Like wildered angels who have lost their way,
And long to flutter back again to God.
Bright aspirations rush up from the throngs
Like rockets, leaving a long trail of light.
Earth is not quite dissever'd yet from heaven,
But heaves with sudden shocks, electric thrills,
When the transparent rods of truth are dropt
Upon her throbbing veins, and surcharged heart.

Oh, to be one of these!—the mighty bards
Who touch the soul to splendour, and who string
Humanity like harps in sweetest tune
For God to play on as he passes by!
The life of all that is, pulses and throbs
Like subterranean music in their hearts
And the great universe streams through their souls
Like a wide river of perpetual light,
While stars lie fretting on the dark, sleek floor.
Oh, to be one of these!

[Ferdinand coming up unperceived by Alexis.

Well, and why not?

Hast thou flung up thy old prerogatives,
Burnt all thy title-deeds and rights to fame,
Gambled away thy fine estates in song
And made thyself a beggar?

Alexis.

Ferdinand!

Ferdinand. Ay, Ferdinand, Alexis; come again
To take thee back unto thyself, my friend,
Ye will be strangers by this time I think!

Alexis. Are we not always strangers to ourselves,
And strangers to each other? Evermore
We are insphered, like stars within ourselves,
And though we light each other in the dark,
There is no contact, no escape from self.
We are but torches gleaming here and there
Whose flames may never mingle. Here within
Is this self-conscious Me, and there without
Are others like me, who are yet unlike.
I am a world unto myself, and move
In my own orbit, whence I cannot stray!
And all without are distant stars to me,—
Between us wide-jaw'd darkness, hungry night!

Ferdinand. I know not. There are holy laws which bind
The planets of one family in one.
Systems and suns are link'd together thus,
And all to God. It may be that one pulse
Sent from his central heart, runs through the whole,
Threading the chasms with sympathies.

Alexis. It may.
Would I could say it is.

Ferdinand. Ah, thou art changed!
Alexis. Changed? Ay! Changed, and still changeable,
good friend!
My soul sloughs herself once a day at least.

I bury my old self each starry night,
And come a stranger to the world again.
'Tis an old story that we never see
The self-same picture twice !

Ferdinand. And art thou changed,
To all who love thee—to thy friends, *Alexis* ?
Alexis. Friends, Ferdinand ? I have no friends—want
none !

Ferdinand. No love—no Flora,—sitting like the moon
In her own pallid sorrow through the night,
And weeping that her lover never comes ?

Alexis (*pausing, and pressing his hands to his head*). My
soul,
Like a great monster, has devour'd my heart,
And now in hunger preys upon itself.
I have no faith in aught, no love, no hope.
My glory has gone from me ; and I stand,
Like Samson underneath the reeling house,
With nothing but the thundering walls, and shrieks
To bear me company—I long for death !

Ferdinand. All soul ? A very novel-heroine !
Alexis. Last night I dreamt the universe was mad ;
And that the sun its Cyclopean eye
Roll'd glaring like a maniac's in the heavens ;
And moons and comets, link'd together, scream'd
Like bands of witches at their carnivals,
And stream'd like wandering hell along the sky ;
And that the awful stars, through the red light,

Glinted at one another wickedly,
Throbbing and chilling with intensest hate,
While through the whole a nameless horror ran ;
And worlds dropp'd from their place i' the shuddering,
Like leaves of Autumn, when a mighty wind
Makes the trees shiver through their thickest robes :
Great spheres crack'd in the midst, and belch'd out flame,
And sputtering fires went crackling over heaven ;
And space yawn'd blazing stars ; and Time shriek'd out
That hungry fire was eating everything !
And scorch'd fiends, down in the nether hell,
Cried out, " The universe is mad—is mad ! "And the great Thing in its convulsions flung
System on system, till the cauldron boil'd—
(Space was the cauldron, and all hell the fire,)
And every giant limb o' the universe
Dilated and collapsed, till it grew wan,
And I could see its naked ribs gleam out,
Beating like panting fire,—and I awoke.
'Twas not all dream ;—such is the world to me !

Ferdinand. Why, this is terrible ! These haggard thoughts
Are breeding madness in thy heart and brain,
Making a moonlit charnel of thy soul.
Come, then, and lave thee in the wells of love,
Ere these hell-grimings sink beneath the skin.

Alexis. Too late ! I tell thee it is all too late !
I must pass through this vigil all alone.
I have flung down my gauntlet to the world,

And it hath ta'en it up and smitten me,
And I am crush'd. If ever I should rise,
I will remember you, my friends! my friends!

[*A long silence, during which they walk on.*

'Tis the old woe that rankles in my heart.

I listen'd to the Siren Mysteries

Until they master'd me—and I am lost!

Great bars of purple sunset hem me in

And shut me out from God; the tawdry Day

Puts on her flaunting baubles all in vain;

And the blue sky hangs o'er me like my fate.

A cruel purpose lashes the white sides

Of the stark universe. My faith is gone,

And human life to me seems purposeless,

Godless and lawless, as a bandit's talk.

Night brings to me no rest. My dreams are wild

As the lank hair of ancient prophetess

Streaming in frenzy on the midnight wind;

And my poor soul that once embower'd great thoughts,

Noble ambitions, lofty aims, pure hopes,

Is turn'd into a hospital by day

Where madness harbours from the jeers of men;

And then at night, when all the world is still,

A troop of jabbering demons travel through,

Crying "There is no good, no evil, and no law,

No right or wrong, no Hell, no Heaven, no God,

Nothing but thee and orderless decay!"

And there,—black,—coiling in extremest space,

A hideous doom seems whetting its grim jaws,
To take the flying worlds in at a gulp !
I see them go careering towards it still,
Like young birds wheeling round a rattlesnake ;
And writhe and struggle, like a drowning man,
Striving to warn them, finding I am dumb !

Ferdinand. Nightmare, my friend—and heavy suppers— ✓
hey ?

SCENE XI.—*A Garden. Moonlight.*

Ferdinand and Caroline.—*The latter carrying their child. Flora a little apart.*

Ferdinand. Oh what a rich and lovely day is dead !
It came up like a Monarch from the East ;
When the grey bars of dawn were turn'd to gold,
And night shrank back to let the bright one in,
The earth broke silence, and from out her heart,
A thousand singing joys burst like young birds
And went up pure and carolling, heavenward.
It was a happy marriage morn. The earth
Blush'd crimson in her flowers :—the lambkin winds,
Like angels loosening sorrow from the soul,
Shook the light dew from off the smiling leaves,
And all was gladness over sea and land.
Then as the day wore on, a stillness stole,
Like a long pause in music, o'er the earth.
The sea no longer panted on the shore, ✓

But, like a jaded god, lay still and slept;
Not a leaf stirr'd, and every bird was dumb.
The world stood hush'd beneath the blazing sky,
Like a Queen stricken in her marriage robes ;
One almost heard the great hot heart of noon
Throb in the silence with fierce passion-pants.
Then dark clouds slowly sail'd along the heavens,
Bending in conclave their great beetling brows,
When from their midst broke out the Thunder-king—
His fierce oration rattling o'er the earth,
Like the dread voice of one who speaketh doom,
Till Echo, like an ancient oracle,
Shook with the utterance of the speaking god ;
And rain came splashing through the trembling leaves,
And the repentant earth was bathed in tears.
Then ruddy sunbeams, radiant with haste,
Rush'd past the black skirts of the flying storm—
Bright mediators between earth and heaven—
Rimming the pitchy vault with glowing light ;
Masses of sunshine fell athwart the world,
And forth from the surrounding gloom there came
Exultant shapes innumerable, and caught
The glory dancing on their beating wings ;
And singing birds fill'd the bright air with songs,
While sunbeams intertwined threads of gold
Amidst the sable curtains of the storm,
And, like the heavenly finger on the wall,
Wrote mystic characters upon the clouds.

And so the Storm-King went, array'd in gold,
So quietly adown the gorgeous West,
One dreamt not it was his black, brawny hand
That shook the silence from the throne of noon.
He and his clouds went down into the West
Like angels golden-haired. Then twilight came,
And light was streak'd with darkness, Zebra-like,—
Dun, mystic twilight, heralder of Night,
Going before her, like a swarthy page.
And now the great Star-Queen herself has come,—
Night, the revealer of the wedded worlds,
Who draws the bright sun-curtain from the earth,
And lets her look into infinity !

Caroline. See, the moon hangs there on the verge of stars,
Like a bright vestal at a temple-porch.

Ferdinand. Ah, 'tis a blissful night ! The universe
Is a great rushing hymn of praise to God.
My heart is singing with the happy spheres ;
Not a string jars but all is harmony.
Night is the beautiful black slave of God,
And bends before him ever wrapt in awe,
While her great heart throbs thanks in burning stars !

Caroline, to her child. Ah, toss thy little arms, my pretty
one !
Thou canst not reach those beautiful bright things
That bend down towards thee from the blue-brow'd sky.
Ah ! do they smile on thee, thou laughest so ?
And hast thou learnt the mystery of their speech

That thou dost prattle on so eagerly ?
What ! leaping from my arms to go to them ?
Not yet ! not yet ! my dear, my lovely babe !

Ferdinand. Not yet ! Not yet ! That thought of starry
death

Comes with a shock upon my wilder'd soul.
O Death ! I tremble at thy very name,—
Thou terrible Iconoclast—thou dream
From which men waken demigods or fiends—
Thou great soul-sunderer—dreadful mystic, who
Walkest the earth with two worlds at thy heels !
Souls know thee—pure souls—for thou art their friend,
Hearts hate thee, Angel, and thy winning ways !
Thou comest to the festal halls of life,
Exchangest nods with some belovéd guest,
And he gets up and goes—goes with thee, Death,
And we are lorn and lonely evermore !
Thou slidest in among love-wedded hearts,
And there are empty chairs, and vacant rooms,
And gulfs of darkness in the souls of some,
In which eternity hangs like a star !
Black hat-bands banner thee along the streets ;
And o'er the hearts who wear them are black bars
That serve to dungeon in the bright-wing'd soul,
That beats against them in ecstatic woe,
Longing to plunge out into seas of light
And sail away to join the cherish'd one !
Thou comest to some quiet, happy home,

And silence falls like snow upon thy steps—
A lonely woman has grown fond of graves,
Or a strong man goes bending all his days—
These are thy triumphs, Death! I love thee not.
Thou hast such fearful power to strip my soul,
As a storm hath to shake the apples down
From a rich orchard-tree, and leave it bare
And wretched in the cold arms of the winds.
Thou hast such fearful power to spoil my home
Of all the treasures I have stored it with,
Letting the long tongue of the howling storm
Lap up its bliss, till not a guest be left
But thee, and it, and woe, with wolf-like eyes;
Such power to make of this transcendent world,
Now laved in sunshine, with its avenues
Stretching away into eternity
Pleach'd o'er with golden fruits and lined with flowers,
Lit up by lights from both worlds—silver-edged,
Like starlight sloping down to meet the dawn—
Into a draggled road across flat fens,
O'er which in gusts, go, witch-like, jabbering winds,
While cold November rains come drizzling down,
And one man only tracks the miry way,
Plodding on wearily towards the distant sea
That lifts its leaden waves up sluggishly
To meet the cold breast of the dripping clouds;—
Such power to strip the world of all its joys,
And leave it tatter'd as a tree in March,

That I must shudder when I hear thee named,
Knowing how much I have for thee to take ! [A pause.]
This night, this starry night,—I like it not.
'Tis glittering with the heraldry of death !
This silence seems portentous. The hush'd winds
Are whispering to each other, like pale friends
Around a new-made death-bed. I am sick !
This thought of death has jarr'd upon the night,
And struck the music from its beating heart,
Leaving it joyless as a wintry wood.
The moon is not so lovely as she was.
Where is she ?

Caroline. Hiding there behind the clouds.

Ferdinand. And now she comes forth from them
shudderingly,

All white, and hasty, as a fear-bleach'd ghost
Trembling from out the sweltering arms of fiends !

Caroline. Nay, not so ghastly ! Rather like a soul
Who has pass'd through the portals of the tomb,
And come forth fair as she is from its glooms,
With an eternal wilderness of bliss
To travel over on its way to God.

Ferdinand. Eternity—the portals of the tomb—
Still is our talk of Death—the mighty one
Who dwells beyond the outer edge of Time,
And yet inhabits not Eternity,
But liveth in mid region 'twixt the two ;
With one foot planted on the life-fringed world,

And with the other lost in obscure deeps,
He swingeth souls across we know not what
Of wild and fearful, 'mong the thrones and crowns,
And pluméd splendours of infinity!

Caroline. Ah! there is something strangely grand in death.

One moment, and the soul still lingers here ;
Another, and 'tis gone to be with God ;
And then the haunted spot that "Knew it once,
Knows it no more, for ever!" Dreadful words—
Full of wild import to the lingerers here.
O Death ! we are so happy that thy looks,
Though heaven itself shines through thy pallid face,
Can win us not. Thou canst not tempt us hence.
The world is very fair. She is all heart ;
And all her heart is steep'd and swims in love.
In love the landscapes sleep. The stars sing love,
Glowing upon the bosom of the night—
The heaving bosom of the midnight heaven—
And love shines out the soul of all things here.
We are so bound together, Silent One,
That, if thou takest any, oh ! take all.
Sunder us not, but let us still be one.

Ferdinand. Oh ! it were sad indeed to change our lot
For some poor wintry phantom of a hope ;
To turn our present o'erbrimm'd happiness
Into a dreamy, far world-seeking faith,
And stumble through the quagmires of our days,

Crying, to hush the agony within,
“ Remember the star-kingdoms yet to come ! ”

Caroline. And yet, perchance, it were a holier life
To hang for ever, like a star, on heaven.

Ferdinand. Not to be drawn there by an earthly love.
The soul should long for heaven, and not the heart.
Heaven should not be a refuge, but a home ;
Not a mere region of still peace, a state
Of freedom from the slavery of pain,
For which we sigh when we are steep'd in woe,
And earth no longer is endurable—
But the great house of God—the home of truth—
The congregation of the just and good.
'Tis good the soul should still be climbing up
Towards the bright thrones of immortality ;
Not that the heart should be dragg'd heavenward
By the long tendrils of an earthly love.

[A pause.]

Edith was right. She said she could not die
Until she loved God only for Himself,
And heaven for what it is. Her latest words
Were true and beautiful as her brief life.

She said, “ The sorrows which the soul endures—

Not self-inflicted—are but hooded joys ;
That when she touches the white strand of heaven
They cluster round her, and slip off their robes,
And laugh out angels in the world of light.” [Another pause.]
'Tis strange how but a word, a sidelong glance,
Hath power to change the current of our thoughts.

Our talk has guested Death, till he has made
His home within us ; like a grisly dream
Haunting a murderer's midnight, he remains.
We came out here to meet the lovely Night,
We said she was the very queen of love,
Our hearts rhymed to each other like a song,
Our souls were poems, fill'd with tranquil thoughts,
And we read out the meaning of the stars
In love, and pure exultant happiness.
But now the dance is done—the guests have gone,
Leaving us nought but the dishevell'd room,
And the pale flickering lamps. This thought of death
Fills up the compass of my soul ; and she,
Like a black sun, sheds it on outer things.
We have turn'd night into an Eblis-hall ;
We've built a throne for Death among the stars ;
The canopy of midnight is his tent,
And yon bright moon is but his minister.

Caroline. Nay, thou art ill, my much-loved Ferdinand.
Alexis hath infected thee with gloom.
Art thou not happy that thou talkest thus ?

Ferdinand. Happy ? too happy ! God hath given me thee,
And that sweet babe now nestling on thy breast.
Adam whirl'd suddenly out of Paradise
In the rough arms of jaggéd thunder-winds,
And flung down breathless on a wilderness,
Were not so lorn as I in losing you.
There was a widow, and she had a son ;

He went forth from her ; and she said the sun
Set, as she caught the latest glimpse of him.
The sun that set that night rose never more ;
'Twas not the same that came up in the morn ;
It wanted the heart-glow the old one had.
Her son was far away—oh ! far away,
And the cold sunlight could not warm her heart.
There came a letter ; he was coming back ;
And the old light play'd once more on the hills.
'Twas winter time. She went down to the shore.
The waves were leaping in the arms of storms.
Three days she stood upon the fringe o' the sea ;
The vessel hove in sight—and he was there !
Oh, how the ocean fretted ! How it foam'd !
Oh, how the ship was laugh'd at by the waves !
Still he was there—her loved one !—'twas enough.
There came a mighty gust ; but still she clung
To the sharp rocks, that tore her spray-drench'd hands.
She look'd again. There was a waste of waves— •
A world of leaping water—and no more !
One dreadful billow flung a corpse on shore,
A white corpse—'twas her home-returning son.
The sun set then, and never rose again !
What were her woe to mine in losing you ?
Ere I knew thee I was unto the world
But what an idle dream is to the night,
Hopeless and aimless, as the pilgrim clouds.
God gave me thee, and a great golden dawn

Broke on the slumberous splendours of my life.
I was no more a dreamer in dream-land,
But a bliss-haunted tenant of the world.
My energies which, hitherto, were streams
Babbling in sleepiest lazy monotones,
Beneath the umbrage of thick summer woods,
Leapt forth into the sunshine, and laugh'd out
Real living ripples, amid real things.
The world to me was always beautiful ;—
Now it was holy too. I gazed no more
With vague eyes on the proud-dom'd temple-porch,
But went within, a worshipper of God.
Music was all I heard ere I knew thee,—
Music, but inarticulate, and wild ;
Now I could hear the voices as they sang,
And the great burden of their chant was God !
And when our boy first smiled into my eyes,
His new-born angel-spirit woke in mine
A kindred angel, and the two were one ;
And, o'er the barriers of our separate lives,
Held holy converse on their common heaven.
In my best moods I had seen nought but wings
Hastily glancing past my slumberous soul ;
But now I dwelt with birds of paradise,
And daily, with familiar, gentle hand,
Stroked the long golden splendour of their plumes !
I, who had been a beggar before heaven,
Grew rich as Persian princes in a day.

New realms of thought were open'd in my soul,
Starry and beautiful as Night herself.
I was Aladdin who had found his lamp,
And all the earth was crusted o'er with gems.
New streams of life rush'd in at every pore ;
Kingdoms of unsought beauty came to me ;
Newer relationships explain'd the old.
I was an unshorn Pagan in a church
When all the worshippers came in and sang ;
Now I was baptized, and a Christian too :
As if the darkness suddenly should break
Into a thousand white-wing'd angel forms
Before the rapt eyes of a tempted saint,
All things grew holy to me—man and beast,
Creeds and religions, and the wheels of life.
My barque had drifted near the shores of heaven ;
Faint odours reach'd me from the happy lands,
And hallelujahs burst upon my ear !
The life of all things beat and throb'd in me ;—
I was a brother to the universe,
And loved all things from grass-blades up to God !
I was so happy, that my happiness
Brought me in contact with all blissful things,
And made me one with them. Before, I stood
A blind man 'midst huge piles of hoarded gold ;
My eyes were open'd, and my soul grew rich.
You are my fated Lusitanian stars—
And if you fall, my being falls with you ;

You are my Norna's candles in the world—
Sink in your socket, and my life sinks too ;
Without you I were but a Samson shorn—
A helpless Abaris without his spear.
My spirit still might burn within this clay,
'Twould be like those sepulchral lamps of old
That watch'd for ages o'er the dust of death,
And died out when the light of heaven broke in.
Without you all the world would be a blank—
The idiocy of being ;—without you
Life would be told by pulses, not by aims.
You are the sun whose haloes are my light;
Sink, and the earth is desolate and drear.
Oh ! 'twere as if a dank, dishevell'd night
Should rush up madly, haunted by the winds,
All black as Erebus, upon the steps
Of a great laughing, oriental day.
I should be wretched as a cold, lone house,
Standing a mark upon a northern moor,
Eaves-deep in snow, surrounded by black pools,
Pelted by Winter, ever anger-pale.
To lose you, having tasted of such bliss—
Such sweet companionship, such holy joy—
'Twere as if earth should be flung back again,
All singing as she is, and crown'd with flowers,
Into the reeking cycles of her past :
Instead of valleys, sedgy swamps, and fens,
With grim, unwieldy reptiles trailing through ;

And in the place of singing, bellowings,
And the wild roar of monsters on the hills,
That reel for ever, belching out red flame—
While a hot mist surrounds the grisly brood,
And the world shakes, like madmen in their dreams.

Caroline. Nay, ever trust in God, my Ferdinand ;
'Tis He who gives the tinge to all we see.
He takes the worlds unto His great warm heart,
And it is summer, and they laugh in flowers :
And in correction He is merciful.

Grand purposes still underlie events ;
The great earth is a foot-stool to a babe.
The policies of earth and heaven are one,
And what seems insignificant to us
May swell to grandeur in the courts above.
The tear wrung from a holy heart on earth,
May serve to float an argosy in heaven ;
And the light breath that shakes the trembling twig
May fill a bright archangel's fanning wings.
Time is the crier of Eternity,
And this world is the herald of the next.
All things are but announcements—lifted hands
Invoking the great blessing—the Hereafter—
Fingers that point for ever at the stars !
Ah ! God is ever near us, Ferdinand ;
Life of all life, and Soul of all we see.
These are His ministers—the moon and stars,
Low-whispering leaves, and silver-lisping streams—

These are the altar-fumes—the incense-mist—
But the Divine Shekinah is behind !
We dwell in God as yon stars rest in heaven :
He is without, within, above, below,
And all things preach Him to the holy soul.
The world is but the echo of the words
Spoken by Him to old eternity ;
And the love-prostrate heart may sometimes catch
Dim intimations of the whispering marvels—
Hints from the driving snow, the falling leaves,
The sun-enamour'd flowers, and twilight calms.
Since this stray angel nestled on my breast
A glory has descended on the earth,
And on the lowly walks of humble men.
All things are holy to me as the steps of saints ;
It is as if some bright, angelic throng
Had brush'd the hills and meadows with their wings,
And left their splendour trembling on the grass.
My passion-beating heart is holier now
Since this white flower has rested on its throbs.
There is an ancient lore in childish eyes ✓
That reaches back to those primeval times
Ere there was aught but soul, and bliss, and heaven.
He brought me nearer to those happy days ;
He told me tales of God and Fatherland,
As I lay waking through the long, hushed night ;
And the old songs are ringing in my heart.
What wonder, if sometimes my speech dwells not

With the sweet every-days of mother earth,
But soars away to older, happier climes ?
Oh, not in woe shall we call God our God !
He changeth not. He hath been Love to us.
From Him our half-celestial bliss hath stream'd ;
And even bliss is not its own bright end,
'Tis but the aiming at a greater yet ;
And thinkest thou that He will break the chain
That links us to each other and to Him,
Ere the great purpose is accomplish'd ? No !
I know God better ! 'Tis with awe I say it.
He will not sunder us till both are ripe
For the fruition of all earthly love,
And immortality has seal'd our souls ;
For each is helper to the other's heart,
And both are travelling surely heavenward.
The contract we have made is not for Time,
But for all times, and for Eternity,
For God was in it ; and our love will grow
Coeval with the Deity Himself !

Ferdinand. Ah ! thou art right ! 'Tis woman's argument—
The holiest, and the best—the God-touch'd heart's,
Not subtly spun from wire-drawn intellects.
There is no death—no snapping of the chain
That linketh Time unto Eternity.
Being on earth is but the seedling cast
Beneath the soil of immortality ;
Death is the breaking through the heavy crust,

And heaven the flowering of the mighty plant;
All is progression, up from seed to flower,
Perpetual continuity; no gaps
From baby-hood on earth, to angel-hood in heaven!

Caroline. 'Tis even so. But see—thy sister there—
Our Flora, Ferdinand. How pale she looks,
With her claspt hands up-gazing at the moon.

Ferdinand to Flora. Ah! Art thou lost among yon great
blue deeps—
Prophetic image of the mind of God—
Agleam with stars, as His great soul with thoughts.
Those melancholy heavens have slept for aye,
Earth's birth-pang shrieks broke not their tranquil dream.
Still stretch'd they in their awful trance as now,
While she lay desolate and dumb as they,
Save when volcanoes lifted up their voice—
Olden Isaiahs in the wilderness—
And told unto the incredulous wastes wild tales
Of the great After-time—the age of flowers,
Of songs, and blossoms, MAN and grassy graves?
Or do thy thoughts keep pace with yon lone moon
In her strange journeyings through the star-strewn heavens?
And dost thou view her struggling in the clouds,
Like a great poet with his unshaped thoughts,
Until she comes forth victor, as he does,
Leaving them fair and golden far behind—
A substance and a glory to the world?
Flora. It is the moon I see, but not as thou.

Seemeth she rather a deserted queen
Who hath laid by her queenly robes, and gone
A solitary pilgrim through the streets
Of the wide city of God, in search of him
Whom she adores—her bright, recusant Lord ;
And ever as she goes out by the West,
Lo ! he comes up the shining gates of the East !
Yet patiently she follows on his track,
Nursing a trembling hope within her heart,
And catching blinding glimpses now and then
Of him, and his bright retinue before ;
And where he cometh, lo ! the world laughs out,
And men cry, “ It is day ; ” but where she comes
A great hush goes before,—and it is night !
And she is pale with travel,—hapless moon ! [*A long Pause.*
Hast thou forgot thy promise, Ferdinand ?
Thou hast seen him ? How did he look—what said he ?
Ferdinand. He look'd as pale as he had been with God
Close closeted an hour, and heard the boom
And clangour of the everlasting wheels
In the great under-world of busy doom.
He said, “ Behold a wreck ! Were there a sun
Shiver'd before me I'd crawl into it,
And gladly wrap its ruins round my head,
And hide me from the jeering universe.
Oh, what a terrible and maddening day—
Thunder and sleet, cold shiverings and fierce fires,
Hath burst out racking from my golden dawn !

Friends of my boyhood ! whither have you flown ?
You said of me, when I was but a child,
' Lo ! a new star hath broke upon the night !
Behold with what a mighty spring that soul
Leapeth upon strange truth ! Ah ! it shall yet
Unfold its long white plumes, and rush right up
Into cloud-regions, thrilling heaven with song,
And flinging down wide floods of harmony
Till the world rings, and men look up with wonder ! '

Friends of my childhood, ah ! what say you now ?
True friends no doubt,—false prophets ne'ertheless ! ''

He said that he had gone in search of truth,
A sandall'd pilgrim o'er the wilderness.
Quoth he, " I made a hermit of my youth,
And shut it up in narrow silent cells,
Wooing with whitest hands this angel's love.
Never did fame-bless'd bard more eagerly
Quaff the great golden goblet at his lips
Than I dim glimpses of this heartless jilt.

I was a Roderick in the Fated Halls ;
When the gigantic dangers leapt up arm'd,
Threatening me with their fearful panoplies,
I boldly challenged them, and they once more,
All clangring, dropp'd into their mystic sleep,
And I went on. On did I say ? Ay, on !
But unto what ? Deep call'd to mighty deep,
And down unto the lowest deep I went,
Hoping to meet some wizard in the dark

Who should reveal to me the wonder-world ;
And ever as I went, the lamp of Truth
Flicker'd and flared before me, saying—ON !
Ha ! Ha ! it is a pitiable tale !
Flappings of fear, great wheeling shapes of dread,
Tremours and shudderings shook me on the way,
And made me bend like flag-staffs in the wind.
Yet still the great word ‘ ON ’ rang through the vaults,
And on I stumbled through the whistling caves,
Until at last my guide went swooping o'er—
Hurtling and quivering—a grim, black-jaw'd gulph,
And I stood trembling on the darksome brink,
And saw its bituminous sides stretch far below,
Rugged and bare, horrent and sheer as death,
And I drew back abash'd.”—
He said, his disappointed faculties,
Debarr'd of truth, leapt back upon the world
With energies intensified, and saw
Gigantic shapes of wrong upon its thrones,—
Saw heresies glide snake-like through the church,
Sliming the pulpit-cushion with their trail,
And nestle in the very Bible-leaves !
Saw vast oppressions in the market-place,
And in the halls of commerce, rottenness,—
Falsest philanthropies go through the streets,
And children suck in error with their milk,
Till he lost faith, lost heart, lost everything !
Flora. Ah ! 'Tis a dreary tale, and yet my heart,

My feeble woman's heart, hath faith in God!
A greater e'en than he hath cried in tears
“ My God ! Oh ! why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ”
He will not suffer a great, earnest soul
To struggle with the Enemy alone.
When Reason only tries to scale high heaven ✓
A flaming seraph guards its gleaming gates ;
Even as the mystic sword shut Paradise
Unto our father in the days of old,
Is the bright heaven of Truth closed up on man.
But oh, there is a humble postern door
Open to love,—to love, and childlike faith,
Where he may glean up glances of the gods
As they go shimmering past in shining mist.
I do believe he will be brought to God,
Even as the babes were unto Christ of old,
And hear the blessing sounding o'er his head !
My poor Alexis ! Would that I were with thee,
But I would be alone. Good night !
Ferdinand and Caroline. Good night !

SCENE XII.—*A Chamber filled with books.*

ALEXIS alone, after an interval of many months.

The heart is a dumb angel to the soul
Till Christ pass by and touch its bud-like lips.
Not unto thee, bold spirit on the wing,
Does the bright form of Truth reveal itself;

Soar as thou wilt, the heavens are still above,
And to thy questionings no answer comes,—
Only the mocking of the dumb, sad stars.
Awhile thy search may promise thee success,
And now and then, wild lights may play above,
Which, with exultant joy, thou takest for
The gleaming portals of the home of Truth—
'Twas but a mirage where thou saw'st thyself,
And not the image of the passing God !

¶ Oh, with what joy we all set out for truth—
Newer Crusaders for the Holy Land—
Till one by one our guides and comrades fall,
And then some starry night, some cold bleak night,
We find we are alone upon the sands,
Far from all human aids and sympathies,
While the black tide comes roaring up the waste.

¶ The highest truths lie nearest to the heart ;
No soarings of the soul can find out God.
I was a bee who woke one summer night,
And taking the white stars for flowers, went up
Buzzing and boooming in the hungry blue ;
And when its wings were weary with the flight,
And the cold airs of morn were coming up,
Lo ! the white flowers were melting out of view,
And it came wheeling back—ah ! heavily
To the great laughing earth that gleam'd below ! [A Pause.]

God will not show Himself to prying eyes :
Could Reason scale the battlements of heaven,
Religion were a vain and futile thing,
And Faith a toy for childhood or the mad ;
The humble heart sees farther than the soul.
Love is the key to knowledge—to true power,
And he who loveth all things, knoweth all.
Religion is the true Philosophy !
Faith is the last great link 'twixt God and man.
There is more wisdom in a whisper'd prayer
Than in the ancient lore of all the schools :
The soul upon its knees holds God by the hand.
Worship is wisdom as it is in heaven !
“ I do believe ! Help Thou my unbelief ! ”
Is the last, greatest utterance of the soul.
God came to me as Truth—I saw Him not ;
He came to me as Love—and my heart broke,
And from its immost deeps there came a cry,
“ My Father ! Oh ! my Father, smile on me,”
And the Great Father smiled.

[*Another Pause.*

Ah ! 'tis a blessed world—a theatre
Where mighty purposes play out their parts :
We see not half its beauty till we are
That which we see, through love. The holy heart
Fulfils the dream of olden alchymists,
Turning all things it touches into gold.
The highest wisdom of the wisest seer
Is that which brings his childhood back to him.

Christ was the babe's Apostle ; and his words
Breathe the pure air of childhood, and its faith :
Stoop, stoop, proud man ! the gate of heaven is low,
And all who enter in thereat must bend !
Reason has fields to play in, wide as air,
But they have bounds ; and if she soar beyond,
Lo ! there are lightnings and the curse of God,
And the old thunder'd "Never !" from the jaws
Of the black darkness, and the mocking waste.
Come not to God with questions on thy lips,
He will have love—love and a holy trust,
And the self-abnegation of the child.
'Tis a far higher wisdom to believe
Than to cry " Question," at the porch of truth.
Think not the Infinite will calmly brook
The plummet of the finite in its deeps.
The humble cottager I saw last night,
Sitting among the shadows at his door,
With his great Bible open on his knee—
His grandchild sporting near him on the grass,
When his day's work was done—and pointing still
With horny finger as he read the lines,
Had, in his child-like trust and confidence,
Far more of wisdom on his furrow'd brow
Than Kant in proving that there is a God,
Or Plato buried in Atlantis dreams !
I was a pilgrim gone in search of Him ;
Reason, my guide, went wheeling through the dark,

And still I follow'd with a faltering joy,
Until at last we reach'd the utmost verge
Where " Hither and no Farther ! " is inscribed,
And my guide vanish'd, leaving me alone—
Alone—and the bright shrine I sought far off !
Alone—and the great waste behind me there,
Shutting me out from love and sympathy ;
And there before, a waste yet wider still.
Ah ! then it was my sturdy heart was touch'd,—
I first felt awe, then love, then confidence ;
And when I came once more into the world
From this soul-pilgrimage, behold ! it smiled :
And it was morn, and all the birds were up,
And the one heart of all things throb'd with joy ;
And the old hills lay sleeping, sleek in sunlight ;
It was a jubilee in praise of God,—
An Orphic song—a festal hymn of praise !
I saw all seeming eccentricities
Were but the playing of the wider laws,
While law itself was systematic Love.
The passing winds sang vesper hymns to me ;
And the old woods seem'd whispering, " Let us pray ! "

[A long pause, broken by the entrance of FERDINAND, accompanied by FLORA and CAROLINE. ALEXIS clasps FLORA in his arms in silence. FERDINAND and CAROLINE retire to the lower end of the room.

Alexis. Again ! Oh, yet again, my lovely one !
Do I once more behold thee, Flora mine ?

Those tears—those gushing tears—ah ! let them fall,
Dumb witnesses against me are they not ?
Hast thou not one word of reproach—not one ?
Oh, speak to me ! Break through this dreary pause,
This long, long night, which I have pass'd alone !

Flora. Ah ! why alone, *Alexis*—why alone ?

Alexis. Had'st thou been with me it had never been.
Never had unbelief and grim despair
Held me a prisoner in their dreary realms,
With such an angel at my side as thou !
I had been brought to God by smoother paths.
But thinkest thou that I could come to thee
With my soul rocking between heaven and hell ;
With all my heart unkingdom'd, and my faith
Clinging but faintly to the skirts of God ;
That I, who utterly despised myself,
Could bring a thing I so despised to thee ?
What ! Place a crack'd diamond on that lily hand !
What ! Mingle impious doubts and questionings
With the oblation of thy virgin prayers !
My love had been as sad unto thy soul
As a dead bird within a golden cage.
Thy heart is still unchanged—I see it is !
Thy presence here—thy smiles—thy happy tears—
All tell me that thy love is with me yet !
That letter which I wrote to Ferdinand,
Telling him of the change within my soul,
Hath brought thee hither with him, to my side !

Flora. Ah! never elsewhere have I been in thought.
I have gone with thee through the tug and strife
Between the world of darkness and of light.
I never doubted thee—no, not an hour!
When woman loses faith in him she loves
There is no other comforter but God,
No time, no place, nor any world but heaven!
I have sigh'd for thee, wept for thee, pray'd for thee,
And would have died for thee, believing thee
As worthy of my life as of my love!

Alexis (aside). O God! in mercy hast thou come to me.
Thou hast o'erbrimm'd the measure of my bliss!

[A long pause.]

(To *Flora*.) Dost thou remember it—that olden time
When the woods whisper'd round us ere the Night
Had loosen'd her dark tresses o'er the world,
And a strange shadowy stillness, like a sleep,
Was settling on the Abbey's swarthy walls?
We had stroll'd from our friends, and stood beneath
The dark and broken arches, lichen-strewn.
We heard their talk far up the slumberous vale;
They seem'd a part of it, but not of us,
For we two were alone, and all the world
Seem'd dim and distant as some Siren-land
Moon-bath'd, and murmuring in an olden dream.
We were alone. I told thee of my love,
And question'd thee of thine. There was a hush
In which my being—present, past, to come—

Englobed itself into a moment's space,
And trembled like a dew-drop on the grass ;
A hush so pregnant—such a hungry hush,
That I leapt startled at thy whisper'd "Yes!"
Thy "Yes," my Flora, that one little word
That made me rich as any sun in heaven,
With a whole retinue of courtier worlds
Hanging upon his skirts to catch his smile.
It was as if a broken harp should thrill
Full-string'd and golden in a moment's space,
And give out music to the very winds.
That happy eve!—Dost thou remember it?

Flora. You lordly men live too much in your souls
While we poor maids live wholly in the heart.
You say "My mind to me a kingdom is;"—
We place the seat of empire otherwhere!
And thinkest thou a moment such as this,
In which a whole life's destiny was pack'd,—
A moment, said I?—Nay, the heart of being,
Destined to colour all my future life,—
A moment from the which my after years,
Like to blood-globules should derive their tone,—
That like the soul of nebulosities,
Trembled with fate, and starry after-life—
Could be forgotten in my waking hours?
Thy words to me were doom, I heard them all;
I answer'd thee, and gave thee love for love:
And thenceforth I was thine in heart and soul!

Alexis. With this sweet memory nestling in my mind,
In one of my most self-desponding hours,
I wrote a tale of this same summer-time,
Which was to be prophetic of our fate.

Flora. Oh let me hear it now that happiness,
Hangs o'er us like a blush of ruddy dawn !

ALEXIS reads from a manuscript.

Eve has come trembling down upon the world
With her cool blessings and her odorous calms.
Another busy, bright-hair'd Day is dead,
With all its eager tumults and its strife,
Its pleasant smiles, and agonies of toil :
And now his mother Eve comes stealing on,
Deck'd sadly in her decent funeral robes,
To bury her fair son, and shed her tears
Upon his lovely, flower-lipped handiwork.
No fiery agony was on his brow
When the flushed Day sank, spent and weary, down
Upon his gorgeous cushions in the West,
And so she comes on calmly through the shades,
And seals the shut eyes of the flowers with dew,—
Sweet weeping Eve!—

And they two are alone !
The eye of heaven is lidded yet ; no stars
Leap out like glances from its wondrous orb.
The wind is murmuring round the Abbey-walls
Low gushing tales of sweetest summer-time,—

And they two are alone !

Old dim-eyed monks

Have sat beneath the umbrage of these trees,

Reading their missals in hot, July noons,

| When the Earth panted underneath its wealth,

Like a young queen beneath her gala-robes,

Fold rolling down on fold right regally,

Heavy with gold and gleamy-crusted gems ;—

Or listening to the rippled utterance

Of the bright stream that dances down hereby,

Gayest of all Lotharios, making love

Unto a thousand listening flowers at once.

Here once the garden bloom'd ; and there

The jovial orchard stoop'd beneath the sun,

Lifting its golden apples to the light,

With all their ruddy faces gleaming up

In everlasting laughter to the skies,

Where now the wild-briar strings its pearl-like flowers,

That spread their white breasts to the amorous bees.

Here too came out the solemn midnight chant

When none were by to listen, save the stars,

And Him who wove them in his azure robes,

And hung them round His mighty midnight crown,

As monarchs hang their diamonds round their heads :

But now no long, and tremulous music-thrill

Breaks like a ripple on this lake-like hush.

The shrine is desecrated, and the owl

Whoops wildly where the stately Chapter sat.

The Autumn leaves go pattering on the ground,
Where holy footsteps even fear'd to tread.
The Winter storms come rushing round the walls,
Like him who at Jerusalem shriek'd out "Wo!"
And there are none to take the warning up.
Midnight comes hush'd above the roofless church,
Where once the mighty gold-lipp'd organ stood,
Like a great seraph, with its hundred throats,
Rolling out surges of sweet harmony
In grand triumphal swellings unto God ;
And the lank ivy dangles from the walls,
Where once the baron's banner proudly hung,
And whimples gently to the passing winds ;
And the bright serpent in his golden mail,
Like a bold Paynim, comes to sun himself
Upon the lifted altar, where, erstwhile,
Rich mitred abbots, and lords paramount,
Have knelt in lowly reverence and prayer.
All now is still, this tranquil Summer eve,—
And they two are alone !

Her flaxen hair

Is surging down upon her lily neck,
Like sun-rays upon snow. Her little foot
Is beating nervously the flowery sward,
And her white hand is trembling in his grasp ;
And innocence is round her like a robe,
Making her holy as a sainted shrine.
Sweet rosy tints and blushes of the morn

Come shimmering softly o'er her timid cheek,
Faint as the lustre of the Northern glows
Swooning across the swarthy face of Night.
He stands beside her in his morning pride,
His black curls clustering round his lofty brow,—
A brow whereon great thoughts have set their seal,
Great thoughts, that, like the footsteps of the Lord,
Do hallow all they touch ; which, like the sun
Already sunken, give unto the hills
Long lingering glories when themselves have set,
And, like the touch of an Apostle's hand,
Leave evermore a halo and a glow !
He stands beside her in his morning pride,
Now pale and flush'd by turns ; and she, sweet girl !
Drinks in his flowing words as eagerly
As the parch'd earth the droppings of the heavens,
Or as the silent Night, heart-hush'd herself,
Listens unto the rush of waterfalls.
“ I love thee ! And wert thou transform'd to sand,
I'd write these words upon it with my blood !
I've loved thee long ! Thy slightest, careless words
Have been as welcome to my miser-heart
As the first letter of a wandering son
To his lone mother in her cottage home.
Thy innocent looks and softest winning tones
Have all been guested by my wilder'd soul,
As angels were by men in the old time
Of Patriarchs and Prophets, when the earth

Was but a suburb of the glorious heaven. ✓
I've speculated on thy treasured heart ;
I've struck the balances a hundred times
Between the wealth which thou canst dower me with,
And the great hungry Nothing of thy ' Nay,'
And gambled, like a madman, on thy smiles,
Staking the universe against thy love !
Oh ! to win this, I would have wander'd forth ✓
Over the desert sands of Araby,
And dared the monsters of the jungle try
Issues of life and death, but to bring back
The shaggy lion's mane, or the striped gold
Of the grim tiger from his cavern lair,
Or spotted plush of panthers from the boughs
Of dim primeval forests, for thy feet
To toy with, on some dreary Winter day !
I would have dived into the passionate hearts
Of fiery continents to win thee spoil ;
Have wander'd over dry and burning sands ;
Have crawl'd along the narrow ridge of rocks ;
Have plunged into the depth of shark-fill'd seas ;
Have dared the knife, and gleaming tomahawk ;
And wander'd over unknown, trackless wastes—
A self-made Bedouin for the love of thee ;
And slain the elephant for his ivory tusks ;
And wildly torn the gleaming panoply
From the yet quivering form of serpents dire ;
And wrung, from out the death-clutch, with hard gripe,

The treasured hoards of savages for thee ;
And then come laden back with hard-won spoil,
Like a footsore and swarthy Mussulman
Unto his Prophet's shrine ! I would have shamed
The fabulous tales of olden chivalry,
Outdone the deeds of Arthur and his Knights,
And paled the fame of warlike Saladin.
I would do more ! I would have bent these times,
These wondrous times, with all their mighty thoughts,
Their giant sufferings, and heroic deeds,
Into a rainbow over thy sweet life,
A grand triumphal arch, the which to see,
All future ages should have clapp'd their hands !
Say, say, Dost thou love me ? ”

She was as pale
As the faint Earth with snow upon her cheek.
She meekly answer'd “ Yes ! ”

There came a rush
Into his heart and soul that blinded him.
He lean'd against a pillar for support ;
A moment more, and two fond beating hearts
Leapt to each other like a pair of doves ;
And then, like rustics at a sylvan feast,
Danced to the same wild tune. A lightning kiss
Ran through their trembling spirits with a thrill,
And he broke forth : “ I will be dumb no more !
Great thoughts have long been bounding in my soul,
Like lions caged, against their prison-bars.

I will unleash them, and they shall go forth
To tear and to destroy the plump-form'd lies
That stalk along the highways of the earth !
I will weave garlands round thy radiant head,
As Night doth wreath the Earth about with stars :—
The solemn glory of the midnight heavens ;
The splendours which do pillow the dead sun ;
And the bright pomp and jewel-dews of morn ;
And songs of singing birds ; and tints of flowers ;
And evanescent purples of the skies ;
And all the glories of the earth and heaven,
And of the middle air, and of the sea—
These will I summon with my magic verse,
To be thy slaves for ever ! I will fold
Great thoughts and images about thy name,
Making it deathless as the universe,
And hang it high among the galaxies !
I will enshrine thee in the love of all,
And thou shalt be as dear unto the earth
As the sweet memory of its Eden-days !
And as a gifted artist's mighty thought
Doth come like inspiration on the rocks,
And they shake off their stony cerements,
And leap out hosts of glorious marble-gods,
Even so will I hew out of this grim world
Divinest shapes to tend upon thy steps,
And wait on thee for ever, evermore ! ”

He ceased ; and there was silence for a space :
Their talk grew tenderer ; and a holy calm
Came like a Patriarch's blessing on their souls.
“ Behold ! ” she said, “ how still the great world is !
There is an air of sadness in this hush.
Eve, like a widow whose sole son is dead,
Sits calmly waiting the death-sleep of Night.”
Her eyes had long been fix'd on his. He smiled,
For ere she spoke, Night had clomb up the void,
And sat upon her dark throne in the heavens.
“ We will not talk of sadness,” he replied,
“ Sadness is not for us !
The solemn Night comes hooded, like a nun
From her dank cell, while all the laughing stars
Mock the black weeds of the fair anchorite !
Sorrow is but the sham and slave of joy ;
And this sweet sadness that thou wottest of
Is but the dusky dress in which our bliss,
Like a child sporting with the weeds of wo,
Chooses a moment to enrobe itself.
Come ! I will lead thee to thy tranquil home
Out of the dew and darkness.”

Years have gone,
And a new name has sounded o'er the earth.
A mighty soul hath risen from its dreams
To don the robes of its regality,
And all men chorus it with “ Poet-King ! ”
He glides amid the glitter and the glare,

And feels himself alone !

Far in the North

A churchyard rises high among the fells,
Thick-strewn with graves, as grass-blades are with dew,
Rich harvest-home of Death, which he has reap'd
From fields as fair as any on the earth ;
From meadows on the margin of sweet lakes,
Lost ever in a tranquil dream of heaven,
And smiling valleys, robed about with trees,
O'er which vast mountains lift their ragged peaks,
Like visible thunder hung before the eye,
And hamlets scatter'd o'er the swelling hills,
Spotless and fair as lambs.

Among the graves,

One is besprent with daisies ; and in Spring
The fragrant primrose, saintliest of flowers,
Lifts up its hopeful eye amid the turf,
And she too is alone !

Ferdinand (coming up, and pointing at the table strewn with papers). “ Othello's occupation is *not* gone.”

Alexis. Poems on childhood chiefly. Flora read.

FLORA reads.

Always lightest was her laughter,—

There was dream-land in its tone ;

Though she mingled with the children,

Yet she always seem'd alone.

And her prattle,—'twas but child's talk,—

Yet it always sparkled o'er,

With a strange and shadowy wisdom,
With a bird-like fairy-lore,
Which you could not help but fancy
You had somewhere heard before,
In some old-world happy version
By a bright Elysian shore !

All the little children loved her,—
None so joyous in their play,
And yet ever there was something
Which seemed—ah ! so far away
From the joyance and the laughter,
And the streamlet's crisping foam,—
'Twas as if some little song-bird
Had dropp'd down from yon blue dome,
Warbling still among the others,
Wandering with them where they roam,
And yet hallowing remembrance
With low gushes about home !

Oh the glory of those child-eyes !
Oh the music of her feet !
Oh those peals of spirit-laughter
Coming up the village street !
Shall we never hear her knocking
At the little ivied door ?
Will she never run to kiss us
Bounding o'er the oaken floor ?

Has that music gone for ever ?
Are those tender lisplings o'er ?
Oh the terror ! Oh the anguish
Of that one word,—evermore !

Ever was she but a stranger
Among sublunary things :
All her life was but the folding
Of her gorgeous spirit-wings,—
Nothing more than a forgetting,—
Still she gave more than she took
From the sunlight or the starlight,
From the meadow, or the brook :—
There was music in her silence,
There was wisdom in her look,
There was raying out of beauty
As from some transcendent book ;—
She was wonderful as grottoes
With strange gods in every nook !

And at night, amid the silence,
With her little prayer-clasp'd hands,
She look'd holy as the Christ-church
Rising white in Pagan lands :—
Seem'd she but the faltering prelude
To a great tale of God's throne,—
As a flower dropp'd out of heaven
Telling whither it has grown.

But she left us—she, our angel—
 Without murmur, without moan ;
 And we woke and found it starlight,—
 Found that we were all alone,
 And as desolate as birds' nests,
 When the fledglings have all flown !

But our house has been made sacred,—
 Sacred every spot she trod ;
 For she came a starry preacher
 Dedicating all to God.
 Render thanks unto the Giver
 Though His Gift be out of sight,
 For a jubilant to-morrow
 Shall come after this to-night !
 She hath left a spirit-glory
 Blending with the grosser light,
 Oh the earth to us is holy !
 Oh the other world is bright !

Ferdinand. My eye is resting on a manuscript.
 What is it—burly ballad, song or dirge ?
Alexis. A father's sob above his one child's grave.
 But read it.

FERDINAND reads.

No crimson glories hang about the West ;
 No saint-like halos crown the broad-brow'd hill ;

Pale, drown'd in mists the heavy sun goes down,
And leaves a leaden twilight, calm, and still.
Long, ragged clouds hang sloping from the sky,
Like storm-rent banners on a battle-field ;
And the calm heavens are spread above the world
Cold and metallic as a gleaming shield.

Hush'd are the winds ; the very rills are choked ;
Wild, swarthy splendours were in heaven all day,
Mocking the pale-fringed thunder-clouds that roar'd
Like pallid panthers growling in their play.
A solemn hush is over sea and sky,
Save when hot pants come sobbing through the air,
And the low smother'd moans that from afar,
Tell where the lonely ocean makes his lair.

Oh but for one wild brattling thunder-burst,
To leap amid these pent and labouring calms !
Oh for the husky brawling of the storm,
Whose voice, amid this hush, were sweet as psalms !
Ye clouds ! grudge not your rains, but let them forth !
And, O ye tempests ! Shake your dripping wings !
Nay ! all is hot and pent as some black cave
Where a wild beast is crouching, ere it springs !

In glossy goldenness the buttercups
Look up from out the round and bossy sod
Where they have laid thee, O thou fairest child !
Thou latest, loveliest, miniature of God !

Thou here—amid these dim, o'ershadowing elms—
Thou here—and darkness? Oh, it cannot be!—
Here?—and yet all this deep hush-voicedness—
Here—here—my Emma?—yet no sign of thee?

Away! It is not so!—The misty Night
Would blossom into stars if thou wert here;
A tremulous glory would o'erbrim the clouds,
And heaven itself would swim and hover near.
I should feel little happy motionings,—
Hand clappings, looks of love, and tones of bliss,—
And tiny arms would be about my neck,
And ruddy lips would pout into a kiss!

Ah! 'tis but yesterday when thou didst come,
Dower'd with all graces from God's great right
hand;
Thou loveliness epitomised,—thou stray
Wild ray of glory from the starry land!
Thou wert attended by all blissful things;
White wingéd smiles across thy face were driven,
Bright, holy, and divinely beautiful,
Like busy, gleaming, memories of heaven!

Ah! 'tis but yesterday the living words
Leapt from thy lips as innocent as fawns;
But yesterday thy rich and mellow laugh
Ran like a river o'er the sloping lawns;

But yesterday the sweetest lustre shone,
Like starlight on a lake amid thy tears ;
And through thy soul, as through a haunted wood,
Went crowds of angel hopes and hooded fears.

But yesterday along the garden walks
Thy little feet went bounding in wild glee,
And, from behind the tree-boles, thy young face
Peep'd, radiant as a star at night, for me ;
But yesterday and thou didst strive to hide
Behind the tangled greenery of the bowers,
But thy gold tresses glimmer'd through the screen,
And gave a richer sunlight to the flowers.

It is but yesterday and thy sweet talk
Opened rich wonders to my earnest view,
Like ancient pictures, with their golden mists
And forms of shining angels shimmering through !
But yesterday, and all this weary world
Was sanctified and lovely as a shrine,
For God was near me, speaking through thy lips,
And making my life beautiful through thine.

Oh ! I remember thee, my child ! my child !
All lovely things that beautify the globe,—
Stars, flowers, and rainbows, and the sunny heavens
Gather'd about thee like a gorgeous robe.

Even the Night with thee forgot her glooms,
And came out calm and holy as a priest ;
And the rough storm exchanged his angry roar
For the glad gambols of a sportive beast !

But now ! oh now !—A little empty chair
Casts its lank shadow on my cottage floor,
And a dark memory ever, ever broods
Like a black mute, before my open door.
These and this little grave are all of thee
Which the world offers to my straining sight,—
The world—how poor !—But oh ! the wealthy heaven
That holds this new-born angel in its light !

Flora. Here is another. Shall I read it, too ?

[ALEXIS nods assent.]

She reads “THE CHILD’S DREAM.”

The shadows fall upon the floor,
The clock is ticking on the stairs,
The quiet winds are murmuring low,
From out their odorous garden lairs.
The sun has gone down in the west,
Dim is the valley, long and wide ;
Twilight stands hush’d upon the hills,
Waiting for Night, his starry bride ;
And little Ellen in her room
Is praying by her mother’s side.

Few are the words, and simple, too,
But all her soul goes up with them ;
Things are not prized in heaven as here—
Witness Thou Babe of Bethlehem !
Pray on, sweet child ! Thy little words
Are heard among the Seraphs there ;
Pray on, sweet child ! The world is old,
And sin is whitening all her hair :
And men and women yet to be
May have to bless thy evening prayer.

And now her breath comes soft and warm
From out the counterpane's pure snow—
As if a lily learnt to breathe,
Instead of learning how to grow !
A sweet dream steals upon her sleep—
Led by some angel by the hand,
She standeth on the gleaming sward
Of some enchanted, sunny land,
Where fragrant flowers for ever bloom,
By music-breezes ever fann'd.

And there are slumberous trees that dip
Their lazy branches in the streams,
And grottoes strange as moonlight is
Seen in the golden sheen of dreams ;
And there are wings that glitter by,
And sing and murmur as they go,

And there are streams as blue as heaven,
With a crisp sweetness in their flow—
Streams unlike any on the earth,
With pebbles bright as stars below !

And all the groves and valleys ring
With the light laugh of waterfalls ;
And fruits hang clustering, many-hued,
Gorgeous as tulips from the walls ;
And lambs go frisking in and out,
And sun-plumed birds seek out the shade,
And a strange music fills the air
And is the soul of every glade—
As though a harp should disappear
And be the music that it made !

“ And lo ! ” the bright-brow’d stranger said—
He who led Ellen by the hand—
“ This is not earth, nor is it heaven,
It is the bright-edg’d border-land ;
And hither all your good deeds come ;
Your holy wishes, well-spent hours,
Are here, in this Mid-land, transform’d
To birds and blossoms, fruits and flowers,
Your holy tears to crystal streams,
Your prayers to amaranthine bowers !

This is the future that you see
When Hope is limner to the eyes—

The Past evangelized—born anew,
And robed in purples of the skies.
And lo !” he said, “ yon golden cloud
Streaming adown the silent blue !”
The child look’d up. She saw a mist
With forms of angels glimmering through.
“ Behold !” he said, “ the hosts of heaven ;
See what these wonder-workers do ! ”

And lo ! the angels bore sweet plants
And flowers of every hue and race ;
They came and dug the old ones up,
And placed the new ones in their place ;
And then, with those that they had pluck’d,
They sought once more their starry clime.
“ Behold !” the stranger said, “ how blest
Are all the holy sons of time,
The good they do flowers once on earth,
And then in heaven it grows sublime ! ”

The morning broke with songs of birds
As she unclosed her violet eyes ;
The world seem’d younger than last night,
There was a glory in the skies ;
And Ellen sank upon her knees,
Pray’d that the past might be forgiven,
That *she* might have some angel flowers
Pure as the snow-flakes newly driven—

Flowers that might bless her here on earth,
And more than bless her up in heaven.

Ferdinand. This from Alexis ! Wonders surely grow !
Alexis, the philosopher, the sage,
Whose song should be as wide as yon blue heaven—
A mighty sea where nothing less than worlds
Should sail through the calm deeps in place of swans,
With margin left for comets to stream through,
And brush the gold-dust from the face of suns,
With God himself for Hero, and all space
To its extremest verges for the scene,
With crimson sunsets and with golden dawns
For wayside flowers, with Night as a stray witch,
And Day as page—with a slight episode
To show how first the young stars were unleash'd,
Spangling the hush'd infinity with gold,
Like bright thoughts dwelling in a Poet's mind ;
Alexis, the philosopher, and sage,
Descending to be laureate to a child,
And painting, with fidelity, its dreams !

Alexis (smiling). Thou art the old Alexis—I the new !
I would I were indeed a very child,
With all its purity, its happy dreams,
Its awe, its love, its wondering reverence !
We full-grown, bearded men may pry and pry,
But the last secret that we learn is this—
That being is a circle after all,

And the last line we draw in afterlife
Rejoins the arc of childhood when complete—
That to be more than man is to be less. [*A pause.*]
Here is a song—but in another mood—
The Poet's mighty mission is its theme.

[*He takes up a Manuscript and reads.*

Moan the old eternal billows, sound the winds their ancient
pipe.
'Tis the Autumn of the Ages, and the golden fruits are ripe;
High they cluster 'mong the branches in the regions out of
sight,
And the Mighty One who gathers them must pass the realms
of night,
Flinging back, like regal ocean, the pale corpses of affright.

Whisper softly mystic voices, busy still are shadowy hands,
And a deep prophetic murmur trembles o'er the needy
lands.

He is coming whom you wot of,—He, the godlike son of
Time,
Who will make your age immortal, and your energies
sublime—
Teach your parch'd hearts how to blossom, and your spirits
how to climb.

Lo! he dwells amid the silence—like a ring of paly fires
Burn the ancient Bards around him—melting music from
their lyres.

And he glideth like a spirit up the dim aisles of the past,
To the Altars of the Heroes, where a strong oath binds
him fast,
And the old Forever shouteth—" Lo a new Iconoclast ! "

Comes he thence ring'd round with glory from the gleams
of yesterday,
With englobed to-morrows bursting like young buds in
laughing May ;
And he looks into the Future—sees upon its shining strands
Mighty songs with mighty burdens lying on the golden
sands—
Sleeping angels—till he wake them—to instruct the trembling
lands !

" Why," he says, " should this bright Present of the Past
be but a slave ?
Why should living men be linkèd to the ashes of a grave ?
Lo ! the present hour is holy as a grand cathedral-chime ;
Lo ! *this* gorgeous day goes Queenlike with the treasures of
all Time,
And her men and women dangle on the verge of the
sublime.

Mighty thoughts are wildly leaping in dumb play within
their souls ;
They are rich as ancient worlds are, though they show but
icy poles ;

I will lift their thought to sunlight, like a flower above the
sod ;

I will loose the rock-bound waters with a newer Moses'
Rod ;

I will thrill the great world's harp-strings with a new hymn
unto God ! ”

Then once more he seeks old Silence—ancient Mother of
the Wise,

And once more God's mystic Handmaids re-anoint the
Poet's eyes,

And once more the golden Future, by the Past unking-
dom'd stands—

“ Mighty shapes ! ” quoth he, “ this Present clasbeth both
your muffled hands,

Like a new Christ 'twixt the Prophets on the lifted Table-
lands !

And thou Past art but its birthday, and thou Future but its
prime,

And lo ! *this* hour bandeth heroes of the old and coming
time.

Shine the pale stars still in heaven, beat the waves upon the
shore,

Still the angels knock for ever at our close-barred temple-
door,

And the old world still is rocking to the tune of “ Ever-
more ! ”

Why then tremble at the Ancient ? Come out bravely in
to-day ;
Fling your baby's bandage off you ; cast your swaddling
clothes away !
Is not man the God-child ever ? Have the great spheres
lost their power ?
None of all the mystic ages half so rich as this good hour,
For *they* its buried fibres are while *it* shines out the flower ! ”

And once more he seeks the Silence, lowly bending in the
dust,
And the great world shows her spirit flashing 'neath her
ribbèd crust.
And the old sea moans his secret, and the mountains
whisper low,
And earth's creeds, like Chieftains' banners, swing and hurtle
to and fro,
And he sees the truth of all things streaming star-like far
below,
And the mighty spirit-splendours from which outward
splendours flow.

Cries he, “ Spirit is God's mirror, and He shineth every-
where,
Not a soul but has a glinting of His features here and
there,
And where soul is there is beauty gleaming up in outward
things,—

E'en the mountains are but cages where some bird-like
spirit sings,—
And the earth is but the nest-home where they learn to
sprout their wings !”

Then he walks among the spindles, and along the dusty
street,
And he hears the iron clangour, and the noise of busy feet ;—
Sees the heavy ships go laden, like earth's souls to other
lands ;—
Sees the halting, and the hunger'd, and the sick in ghastly
bands,
Sees sleek men go hurrying past them,—with their Bibles
in their hands !

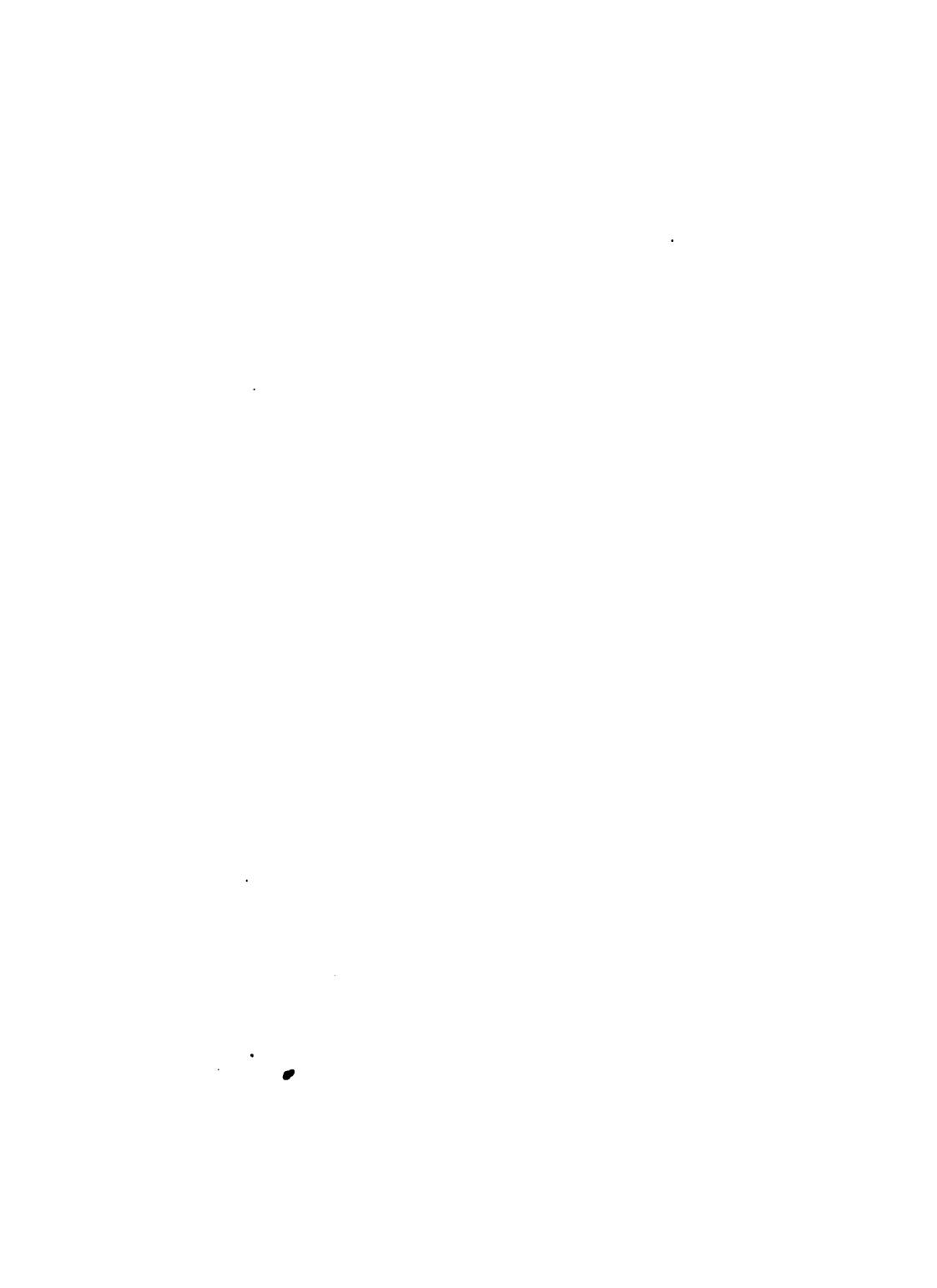
And he cries, “Thus God is honour'd by a plump and
gilded lie !
You would serve Him (while He served you) yet you suffer
His to die.
You will build Him gorgeous temples, (was He ever famed
for pride ?)
While you calmly let those perish for whose sakes the God-
Man died !—
Nay ye shame the very devils,—'Twas not *they* who cru-
cified !

Know that underneath this sunshine lurk a thousand pur-
pling irs ;

Know that far below this common-place leap shaggy-manèd
fires ;
Know, those old God-Daughters,—Destinies—are busy at
their looms,
Working still amid the thunders, and the everlasting glooms,
And the threads they spin are ACTIONS, which they weave
into your dooms !

Know, that in the tide of being there is but one heart and soul,
And the deed you do to-morrow will, like light, affect the whole ;—
That you cannot strike the branches but you hurt the parent tree ;—
For whoso did this evil thing, “ He did it unto ME.”
Though you look before you trample, there is more than you can see !

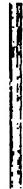
So much as I have learnt, that will I sing;
And, if the world will listen, it is well.
If not, then God shall be my auditor,
And the still Night shall know another soul,
And the great realm of spirits welcome me!





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